THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF CRICKET

WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY

**ISSUE 64** FEBRUARY 2023

www.wisden.com

# THE GREAT EXPERIMENT

HOW ENGLAND FLIPPED TEST CRICKET ON ITS HEAD | BY JOHN STERN

PLUS

**RICKY PONTING**

"BAZBALL? IT'S NO DIFFERENT TO WHAT WE DID!

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH MEL FARRELL

**THE MEN'S TEST XI OF THE YEAR**

OUR PANEL PICKS THE STANDOUTS OF 2022

**"YOU WANT CRICKET IN 30 YEARS? TIME TO GET REAL"**

CRICKET AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

**MAKE SOME NOISE**

HOW WOMEN'S CRICKET BECAME BIG BUSINESS

**THE TEAM THAT WOULDN'T DIE**

ZIMBABWE'S REAWAKENING

ISSUE 64 FEBRUARY 2023 | £5.50

21

9 772515 261540

VISIT…

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

**WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY**

# PAGES FOR

Subscribe and get a **free copy** of *The Legend of Sparkhill* by Moeen Ali

## WHY SUBSCRIBE?

- ✓ 33% OFF THE SINGLE ISSUE PRICE*
- ✓ FREE STORYBOOK BY ENGLAND CRICKETER MOEEN ALI
- ✓ FREE DELIVERY

**ORDER NOW!**

**BY PHONE**
**0129 331 2094**
Give us a call quoting
**SPARK22**

**BY POST**
Complete the form below and send it to
Wisden Cricket Monthly Subs c/o Intermedia, Unit 6 The Enterprise Centre, Kelvin Lane, Manor Royal, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 9PE
(Photocopies accepted)

**ONLINE**
**www.wisdensubs.com**
Go online and enter **SPARK22**
in the offer code box

## YES! I WOULD LIKE TO SUBSCRIBE TO WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY SPARK22

☐ **I would like to pay by Direct Debit at £43.99 for 12 issues**

**Direct Debit form** Wisden Cricket Monthly Subs c/o Intermedia,
Unit 6 The Enterprise Centre, Kelvin Lane, Manor Royal, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 9PE

DIRECT Debit
SUN: 169477

**Your instructions to the Bank or Building Society and signature:**

**Name and address of Bank/Building Society**__________

__________

__________ **Postcode**__________

**Name(s) of account holder(s)** __________

**Bank Sort Code:** ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐ **Account no:** ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Please pay DIRECT DEBIT FINANCE COLLECTIONS (DFC) RE Cricket Properties Ltd Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit guarantee.

**Signature**__________ **Date** __________

I understand that this instruction may remain with DIRECT DEBIT FINANCE COLLECTIONS (DFC) Cricket Properties Ltd and, if so, details will be passed on electronically to my bank/building society.

TO BE COMPLETED BY CRICKET PROPERTIES LTD

*Saving quoted based on Direct Debit price. This offer is non-refundable. Cancellation is possible on expiry. For overseas subscription options go to wisdensubs.com*

***Please make sure YOU fill in this section***

**Name**__________
**Address** __________
__________
__________
__________
**Postcode** __________
**Tel** __________
**Email**__________

***Please fill in recipient details if subscription is a gift***

**Name**__________
**Address** __________
__________
__________
__________
**Postcode** __________
**Tel** __________
**Email**__________

***To pay by cheque or card, price for 12 issues:***

**UK & Channel Islands** **£45.99** ☐

☐ **I enclose a cheque for £**______
(made payable to Cricket Properties Ltd)

☐ **Please charge £**___ **to my card**
(Mastercard ☐ or Visa ☐ only)

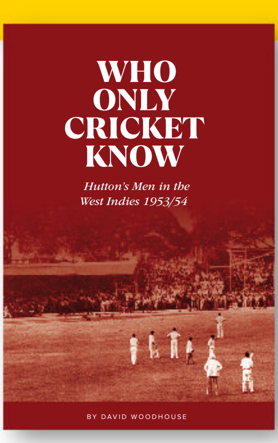
**Card no:** ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
**Expiry date:** ☐☐ ☐☐ **Signature**__________

☐ Cricket Properties Ltd would like to inform you of products, services and events that may interest you. If you would like to receive such contact, please tick the box above.

WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY

# ALL AGES

Every issue includes exclusive interviews, hard-hitting opinion and analysis, entertaining features, coaching tips, county coverage and a club cricket section. Throw in a choice of free gift and there's something for everyone!



Subscribe and get a **free copy** of the award-winning *Who Only Cricket Know* by David Woodhouse

## WHY SUBSCRIBE?

- ✓ 33% OFF THE SINGLE ISSUE PRICE*
- ✓ FREE COPY OF THE ONLY BOOK TO HAVE WON FOUR CRICKET BOOK AWARDS!
- ✓ FREE DELIVERY

ORDER NOW!

**BY PHONE**
**0129 331 2094**
Give us a call quoting
**WOCK22**

**BY POST**
Complete the form below and send it to
Wisden Cricket Monthly Subs c/o Intermedia, Unit 6 The Enterprise Centre, Kelvin Lane, Manor Royal, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 9PE
(Photocopies accepted)

**ONLINE**
**www.wisdensubs.com**
Go online and enter **WOCK22**
in the offer code box

## YES! I WOULD LIKE TO SUBSCRIBE TO WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY

WOCK22

☐ **I would like to pay by Direct Debit at £43.99 for 12 issues**

**Direct Debit form** Wisden Cricket Monthly Subs c/o Intermedia, Unit 6 The Enterprise Centre, Kelvin Lane, Manor Royal, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 9PE

DIRECT Debit
SUN: 169477

**Your instructions to the Bank or Building Society and signature:**

**Name and address of Bank/Building Society**__________

__________ **Postcode**__________

**Name(s) of account holder(s)** __________

**Bank Sort Code:** ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐ **Account no:** ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Please pay DIRECT DEBIT FINANCE COLLECTIONS (DFC) RE Cricket Properties Ltd Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit guarantee.

**Signature**__________ **Date** __________

I understand that this instruction may remain with DIRECT DEBIT FINANCE COLLECTIONS (DFC) Cricket Properties Ltd and, if so, details will be passed on electronically to my bank/ building society.

TO BE COMPLETED BY CRICKET PROPERTIES LTD

*Saving quoted based on Direct Debit price. This offer is non-refundable. Cancellation is possible on expiry. For overseas subscription options go to wisdensubs.com*

***Please make sure YOU fill in this section***

**Name**__________
**Address** __________
__________
__________
__________
**Postcode** __________
**Tel** __________
**Email**__________

***Please fill in recipient details if subscription is a gift***

**Name**__________
**Address** __________
__________
__________
__________
**Postcode** __________
**Tel** __________
**Email**__________

***To pay by cheque or card, price for 12 issues:***

**UK & Channel Islands** **£45.99** ☐

☐ **I enclose a cheque for £**______
(made payable to Cricket Properties Ltd)

☐ **Please charge £**___ **to my card**
(Mastercard ☐ or Visa ☐ only)

**Card no:** ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
**Expiry date:** ☐☐ ☐☐ **Signature**__________

☐ Cricket Properties Ltd would like to inform you of products, services and events that may interest you. If you would like to receive such contact, please tick the box above.

THE Nightwatchman
THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY
WISDEN

THE 2023 COLLECTION

*GET EVERY ISSUE PUBLISHED IN 2023*
*FOR ONE SPECIAL PRICE*

41
SPRING 2023
5
SPRING 2014
5
SPRING 2014
5
SPRING 2014
Nightwatchman
THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY
WISDEN

SAVE 20%
WITH COUPON
WCM2023

Nightwatchman

The Nightwatchman 2023 Collection comprises four issues (41-44) and over 500 pages of beautifully designed, long-form cricket writing*. Issue 41 will be published in March. Issues 42-44 will be published in June, September and December.

www.thenightwatchman.net | 0203 696 5730

*Print and digital formats available. 20% discount excludes shipping charges. Coupon code valid for the 2023 Collection or 12-month subscription (issues 41-44) products only.*

WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY

EDITOR'S LETTER

# Brook: No argument

Pick out a shot from a million and more. A single solitary hit to lodge in the hippocampus. It's tricky, right? Sifting through all that content for a true original? There's just so many of them, a daily riot of scoops and bunts, and the more they come at me, the harder they are to separate. I can guarantee that at the very moment you read this, someone, somewhere in the crickisphere will be clearing their front leg for money.

So January sees three major men's T20 comps going on *at once*. And, sure, all power to them. But there's a cost to all this, because as batting becomes more uniformly expansive, more muscular and thrusting, so the space reserved for variety gets squeezed and the artform loses a little of its individualism.

Don't get me wrong, I still have a few specials stored away. An unknown kid called Babar Azam, batting in the morning murk at Lord's, checking a back-foot punch up the hill in an otherwise forgettable ODI. Mark Waugh's two upper cuts over my head off Devon Malcolm at Chelmsford. Kohli's chest-high straight six at the MCG against Haris Rauf. Pietersen's unhinged slap-drive-pull thing against Brett Lee that day at The Oval. (Pietersen actually occupies a fair bit of space up here.)

Indeed, the spirit of Kev lives on everywhere, most glaringly in the form of Harry Brook. The similarities in style are obvious. Cocked wrists, snapping drives, elaborate crease work etc. He even runs like him, holding the tip of his bat in his right hand. But it's more than aesthetics. Pietersen, propelled by unnatural levels of self-belief, was restless: a man in a hurry. So it is with Brook.

> **The similarities in style are obvious. Cocked wrists, snapping drives, elaborate crease work etc. He even runs like him, holding the tip of his bat in his right hand. But it's more than aesthetics. Pietersen, propelled by unnatural levels of self-belief, was restless: a man in a hurry. So it is with Brook**

Just a year ago, while Joe Root's Test team were enduring their final ordeal at Hobart, Brook was up the road with the Hurricanes and hoping for a break with England. That break duly came in a T20I in West Indies later that month, where the records say he made 10. From where he went to Pakistan, making his maiden T20 hundred for Lahore Qalandars to set up a prolific few weeks with Yorkshire in which he hit three hundreds and six fifties in 12 Championship knocks to land a Test debut in the final match of the summer. Brook spanked two boundaries and top-edged a pull to deep square-leg; Stokes, who'd been tracking him for a while, was naturally delighted.

From that point to now, Brook's story goes stratospheric, yet this is the game now, in fast forward: one of instant validation, overnight riches, and a technicolour tournament every six minutes.

After four Tests, he has three hundreds and one fifty at the very useful average of exactly 80 and a dizzying strike rate of 92.13. Last month he was named the ICC's Player of the Month after picking up the Player of the Series award in Pakistan. All

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF CRICKET
WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY
THE GREAT EXPERIMENT
RICKY PONTING
HOW ENGLAND FLIPPED TEST CRICKET ON ITS HEAD | BY JOHN STERN

this on the heels of a first world title (there will be more) as the newest cog in England's white-ball machine. As Stokes says of him, "Sometimes you see a player and you just *know*."

And that's the thing with Brook. We can spend months, years even, debating the merits of one pretender over another, arguing for the qualities of Zak Crawley, say, while accepting the vast oceans of doubt surrounding him, or positing that someone like Dan Lawrence has what it takes, despite the key absence of actual irrefutable runs. But every so often a player comes along who is so pure, so perfectly alchemised, that debates are pointless.

Pietersen had that – it took him no more than an hour on that wild first day at Lord's (18 years ago!) to show that he was already the best player in the team. Brook has that too. It's demonstrable, and anyone who argues against it is either a weary old sophist or a rugby fan. And how else do we know? Because IPL franchise owners don't usually spunk £1.3m on a kid not yet 24 unless they're pretty sure what they're buying.

The shot, by the way, came in the second Test in Pakistan, with Brook en route to his best hundred to date, a third-innings classic on a wearing Multan pitch, after a horrible shot in the first.

It's minutes before the close. England are five down. The leg-spinner Zahid Mahmood has long since retreated to the comforts of the rough outside Brook's leg stump. Zahid lands it broadly where he wants to, only to find Brook coming at him on the angle and then darting outside the ball's arc to open up the off-side. Getting to the pitch, he extends the hands, leading with his top hand to maintain control, all while dancing on his toes to keep the body side-on. By the time the ball pierces the infield, his feet are planted off the cut strip. Go find the shot, pause it at the key moment, and picture a line drawn vertically down from his hands to his head to his toes, and you'll see that he's perfectly counterweighted.

This is not the shot of an ordinary player. But then, these are not ordinary times.

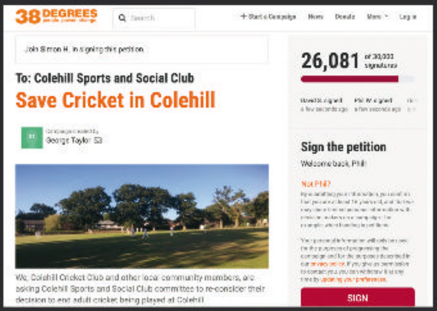
Welcome to issue 64 of *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, featuring some of the finest writing we've commissioned in a long time. A few personal favourites: Taha Hashim's classy piece on Babar Azam as part of our feature on the men's Test XI of 2022; John Stern's masterly dissection of England's tour of Pakistan and where it stands in the pantheon; Katya Witney's study of cricket's laboured response to the climate crisis; and Liam Brickhill's beautiful account of Zimbabwe's stirring rebirth as a cricketing nation. A word too for Jo's expertly crafted interview with John Hollioake, father to Adam and Ben. It's another revealing and moving portrait of a unique cricketing family, as part of a superb series. Happy new year to all our readers. Here's to 2023. It's got the makings of a good one.

Enjoy the magazine.

Phil Walker

**PHIL WALKER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**
@Phil_Wisden

## *EDITOR'S LIST*



38 DEGREES

+ Start a Campaign  News  Donate  More  Log in

John Simon H. is signing this petition

To: Colehill Sports and Social Club

Save Cricket in Colehill

George Taylor 53

26,081 of 30,000 signatures

Sign the petition

Welcome back, Phil!

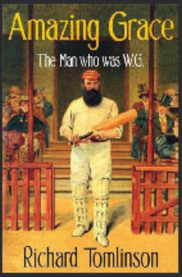
Not Phil?

SIGN

We, Colehill Cricket Club and other local community members, are asking Colehill Sports and Social Club committee to re-consider their decision to end adult cricket being played at Colehill

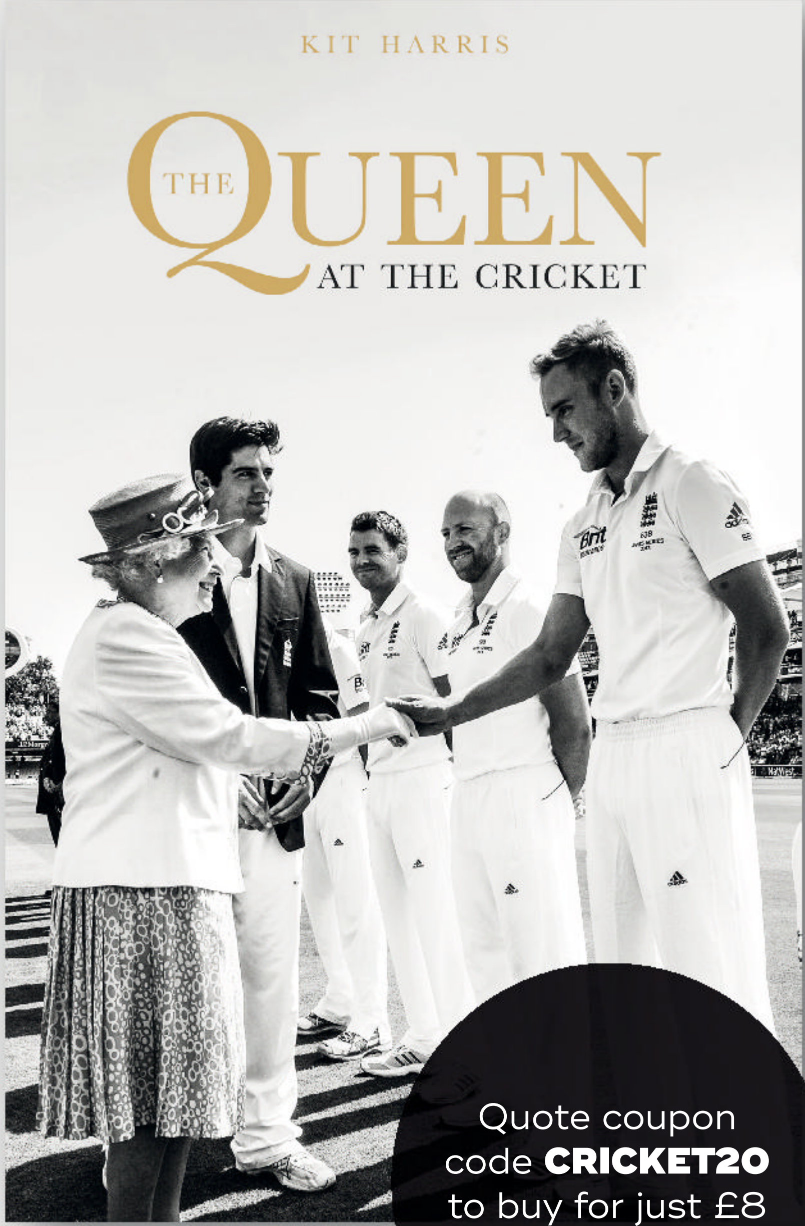
### SAVE CRICKET IN COLEHILL

This is one of those 'spirit of the age' stories that makes you wonder about this sceptred isle of ours. The village of Colehill, in Dorset, has staged cricket for more than a century, but adult cricket has been banned from next season after local residents, new to the area, complained to Colehill Sports and Social Club about cricket balls landing in their garden. Longstanding residents are in uproar at the decision by the club, but the nimbys have dug in. There's a petition running on the **38degrees.org.uk** website to challenge the decision and to seek a more pragmatic compromise to resolve the dispute. Sign it.



### AMAZING GRACE

I picked up Richard Tomlinson's *Amazing Grace* the other day, initially for research and then for fun. It's a stylish account of the great Victorian's life that goes much deeper than others I've read to reveal a man of many contradictions, impulsive and brusque and certainly not unaware of his market value, yet all underscored by an essential sweetness and generosity of spirit. Tomlinson's account of Grace's early tours to Australia, as the bristling, sweating frontman to a bunch of jobbing pioneers, is marvellous. The first truly modern sportsman, and the man who changed everything.



fairfield books

Imagine if you had been watching Test cricket, in person, for 66 years. The Queen lived for 96 years and reigned over seven decades, attending thousands of political, cultural and sporting events. Among them were 44 cricket matches.

Under her gaze are the famous Englishmen of the 50s, piling on the runs and dominating with spin in perfect home conditions. Here are the controversies of the 60s: the throwing debate, the lethal pitch at Lord's, the banishment of the South African team. Here are the snarling Australians of the 70s, bouncing and bruising their way to the Ashes with Lillee and Thomson unleashed. Here are the wondrous West Indians of the 80s, sweeping all before them.

The Queen witnessed it all – and this Christmas, you can relive every moment as she saw it.

Quote coupon code **CRICKET20** to buy for just £8 (RRP £12) + p&p

**ORDER NOW**

THENIGHTWATCHMAN.NET

+44 (0)203 696 5730

WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY

# February 2023

**EDITORIAL**
**T:** 0203 696 5730 **E:** editorial@wisden.com

**Editor-In-Chief:** Phil Walker
**Magazine Editor:** Jo Harman
**Editor-At-Large:** John Stern
**Staff Writers:** Ben Gardner, Yas Rana, James Wallace, Katya Witney
**Reviews Editor:** Jon Hotten

**EDITORIAL BOARD**
Paul Allott, Lawrence Booth, Mark Butcher, Isa Guha, David Lloyd, Suresh Menon, Alison Mitchell, Daniel Norcross, Christian Ryan

**Contributors:** Lawrence Booth, Liam Brickhill, Adam Collins, William Dobson, Mel Farrell, Daniel Gallan, Taha Hashim, Andrew Miller, Paul Newman, Scott Oliver, Mark Ramprakash, Anya Shrubsole, John Simpson

**DESIGN**
**Chief Designer:** Joe Provis

**PHOTOGRAPHY**
All photography by Getty Images (unless stated)
Cover photograph by Aamir Qureshi

**COMMERCIAL**
**T:** 0203 696 5732 **E:** sales@wisden.com
**Commercial Manager:** Toby Phillips

**MARKETING**
**T:** 0203 696 5730 **E:** contact@wisden.com
**Marketing Director:** Sam Stow

**MANAGEMENT**
**T:** 0203 696 5730 **E:** contact@wisden.com
**Managing Editor:** Matt Thacker

**GENERAL ENQUIRIES AND COMMENTS**
**E:** contact@wisden.com

**Publishing Consultant:** Patrick Fuller

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**
You can subscribe to the print version of Wisden Cricket Monthly at **wisdensubs.com** by calling **+44(0)1293 312094** or by sending a cheque payable to 'TriNorth Ltd' to Wisden Cricket Monthly Subscriptions, Unit 6 The Enterprise Centre, Kelvin Lane, Manor Royal, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 9PE. Price and offer details are available by calling the number above, and on **wisdensubs.com** and **wisden.com**. You can subscribe to the digital version – compatible with all major devices – at **wcmdigi.com**

Published by TriNorth Ltd | Printed by Jellyfish Print Solutions
ISSN 2515-2815 (Print) ISSN 2515-2823 (Online)

Twitter Facebook Instagram YouTube

Wisden Cricket Monthly, Fourth Floor, Bedser Stand, The Kia Oval, Kennington, London, SE11 5SS

**wisden.com**

> **I've never been worried about Test cricket until I've seen this team here. If that is the best group of players that South Africa have got then I think it's an issue for the world game, for sure**
>
> **Ricky Ponting pulls no punches in an interview with Mel Farrell, p22**

FEATURE TITLE

THE
Top Six
The month in cricket
No.1

David Warner marks his 100th Test by reaching three figures on day two of the Boxing Day Test against South Africa at the MCG. The 36-year-old opener, who had gone nearly three years without a Test hundred, kicks on to make it a double in 37-degree heat, but is forced to retire hurt after injuring himself while celebrating the landmark and is carried from the field to a standing ovation. In a one-sided series, the hosts go on to complete a crushing innings victory, with Warner named Player of the Match after becoming the first Australian to make a double-century in their 100th Test.

**1st Test, Brisbane**
**December 17-18**
South Africa 152 (Verreynne 64; Lyon 3-14, Starc 3-41) & 99 (Zondo 36*; Cummins 5-42) v Australia 218 (Head 92; Rabada 4-76, Jansen 3-32) & 35-4
**Australia won by 6 wickets**

**2nd Test, Melbourne**
**December 26-29**
South Africa 189 (Jansen 59, Verreynne 52; Green 5-27) & 204 (Bavuma 65; Lyon 3-58) v Australia 575-8dec (Warner 200, Carey 111, Smith 85, Head 51, Green 51; Nortje 3-92)
**Australia won by an innings and 182 runs**

**3rd Test, Sydney**
**January 4-8**
Australia 475-4dec (Khawaja 195*, Smith 104, Labuschagne 79, Head 70) v South Africa 255 (Maharaj 53; Hazlewood 4-48, Cummins 3-60) & 106-2 f/o (Erwee 42*)
**Match drawn**

**Australia won the series 2-0**

PHOTO BY WILLIAM WEST

10 WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY | FEBRUARY 2023

www.wisden.com 11

RICKY PONTING

THE MEL FARRELL INTERVIEW

RICKY PONTING

PULLER, PUNTER, IPL COACH, VOICE OF THE GAME

PHOTO BY MICHAEL DODGE

MEL FARRELL
Australian writer and broadcaster
@melindafarrell

> The interesting thing is what England are going to do with the Ashes, because it seems to me that they need to have really good batting conditions to play that way

Cricket's beating conscience talks to Mel Farrell about his hopes and fears for the game today and into the future

Ricky Ponting leans forward, gazing intently through the large windows of the Bradman Noble Stand at the SCG, and admits his optimism about the future of Test cricket has taken a hit. The reason is the scene unfolding before him: Australian batters racking up a seemingly endless stream of runs and blasting out South Africa's top-order for fun.

The Australian Test summer has been glorious for those who enjoy watching the home side obliterate visitors but a little disappointing if you prefer competitive red-ball contests. After home victories over West Indies by 164 runs and 419 runs there was hope the South Africa series would provide more frisson; instead, two heavy defeats – by six wickets in two days in Brisbane and then a whopping innings and 182 runs in Melbourne – followed by a rain-drenched draw in Sydney in which South Africa were again on the ropes, has left Ponting concerned about Test cricket's prospects for the first time.

"I haven't been [worried] until now," he tells WCM. "I actually thought that this would be more of a contest than this series has been. I knew the way the West Indies one was going to go because you've seen that for long enough to know that was going to happen. Their first-class records are appalling, they're averaging in the 30s in first-class cricket and you're never going to make a jump from that and be a good Test player against an Australian team as good as this one. It just doesn't work that way."

The state of South Africa has been the deeper shock. "I've never been worried about Test cricket until I've seen this team here. Absolutely. People have been pointing fingers at T20 cricket, but every country is playing T20 cricket. It's not just one or two that are playing. I mean, England play more than anyone else and look at the Test cricket they're playing at the moment. So it can obviously have a really good, positive effect on Test cricket as well.

"The West Indies, you can trace that back 20 or 30 years, so you can understand their demise, but it's harder for me to understand South Africa being this. If that is the best group of players that they've got then I think it's an issue for the world game, for sure."

The former Australian captain's blunt assessments can seem almost brutal but his candour, spilling out in rapid-fire sentences as his thoughts form, means there is no wasted time in any discussion.

And, while Ponting is naturally happy to see a winning Australian Test team, he believes the time may have arrived for the ICC to intervene in shoring up Test cricket in countries where the format is struggling financially. The next Future Tours Programme sees South Africa play just 12 Tests in the next two years and 28 in the full four-year cycle, giving little opportunity for their batters in particular to gain valuable experience.

22 WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY | FEBRUARY 2023

www.wisden.com 23

OVERSEAS WINS

STOKING THE FIRE

How England's sense of adventure lit up Pakistan

In the wake of England's outstanding Test series win in Pakistan, John Stern examines how it was sparked by Ben Stokes' bold and unconventional leadership, and considers where it sits in their all-time list of overseas victories

Richie Benaud lived just long enough to see the start of Ben Stokes' England career but sadly not long enough to witness his shape-shifting Test captaincy. The great man would have approved.

Long before Benaud, who died in 2015, became the voice of summer on two continents, he was an intuitive, bold captain of Australia who helped rouse Test cricket from the late-1950s torpor into which it had sunk. Mike Brearley, who knows a thing or two about imaginative leadership, described him as "the spectators' best friend… alert to inject excitement into the game", while still playing to win.

After England's frenetic run chase at Trent Bridge to seal the series against New Zealand last June, Stokes echoed that philosophy when he said his players should "try and think that we're in the entertainment business rather than the sporting business".

"The captain who sees an opening and goes straight for the jugular," wrote Benaud in *On Reflection*, "is the one who is drinking the champagne at the end of the day," not the one who "muses about it for an over or two".

Interestingly, the best captain Benaud said he ever played under was his New South Wales teammate, the effervescent all-rounder Keith Miller, who never led Australia. "The hallmark of Miller's captaincy," said Benaud, "was that he never did anything ordinary, or rather he never allowed anyone to believe it was ordinary." Sound familiar? Benaud also believed that Miller was peerless in assessing a batter's weakness, in part because, as a bowler, he was already doing it.

Benaud led Australia in the Tied Test against Frank Worrell's West Indies at Brisbane in 1960, an event that won over hearts and minds like few matches before or since. It was, according to EM Wellings in *Wisden*, "more than a tied match. It was tied by teams playing in Homeric manner". The following summer, though, was the crowning glory of Benaud's 28 Tests in charge – an Australian series victory in England for the first time in 13 years. Australia scored their runs and bowled their overs

JOHN STERN
*Wisden Cricket Monthly* editor-at-large
@SternWords

36 WISDEN CRICKET MONTHLY | FEBRUARY 2023

www.wisden.com 37

64/356

2022 WISDEN MEN'S TEST XI

1. USMAN KHAWAJA
AUSTRALIA
11 Tests, 1,080 runs at 67.50, 4 hundreds, 5 fifties

66.50 Khawaja's Test batting average as an opener, the highest of any opener in history (minimum 1,000 runs)

BRING THE NOISE

Women's cricket has found its voice, and you'd better be listening. Phil Walker speaks to some of those on the frontline of a revolution

PHIL WALKER
*Wisden Cricket Monthly* editor-in-chief
@Phil_Wisden

YOUR GAME

THE WCM COACHING TEAM

Bat Speed

# IN THIS ISSUE

## *THE TOP SIX*

**10 David Warner doubles up in his 100th Test**
12 Andrew Miller argues the global game is benefitting from the much-maligned county system
14 WCM's Team of the Month
16 Adam Collins on what the Aussies are making of Bazball
18 Najam Sethi, the PCB's returning chair, speaks to William Dobson
20 Lawrence Booth on the innocence of youth

## *FEATURES*

**22 The Mel Farrell Interview: Ricky Ponting takes guard**
28 Re:view – how do you solve a problem like 'Mankads'?
29 Crickipedia
30 The County Files – Katya Witney on the county game's response to the climate emergency
34 Mailbox
**36 John Stern considers where England's triumph in Pakistan sits on their all-time list of overseas victories**
**42 The men's Test XI of 2022**
56 The women's cross-format XI of 2022
**58 Phil Walker examines the burgeoning business of women's cricket**
62 Liam Brickhill on Zimbabwe's heartening resurgence
66 The Great… English leg-spinners
72 ProCreation: John Hollioake, father of Adam and Ben, speaks to Jo Harman about a fairytale story with a tragic ending
78 A Cricket Life: Craig White
82 How to… be a commentator

## *YOUR GAME*

85 In a new series, Scott Oliver on the club game's most fertile lands
**88 In the nets: with Mark Ramprakash, Anya Shrubsole and John Simpson**
92 The Wisden Club Cricket Hall of Fame

## *FINAL SESSION*

93 Time Warp quiz
94 Reviews
96 Chaos Theory: McCullum misfires at the IPL
98 The run out that changed my life, with Gary Pratt

NEXT MONTH
FEBRUARY 23
OLLIE ROBINSON
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

### THE

# Top Six

### *The month in cricket*

## No.1

David Warner marks his 100th Test by reaching three figures on day two of the Boxing Day Test against South Africa at the MCG. The 36-year-old opener, who had gone nearly three years without a Test hundred, kicks on to make it a double in 37-degree heat, but is forced to retire hurt after injuring himself while celebrating the landmark and is carried from the field to a standing ovation. In a one-sided series, the hosts go on to complete a crushing innings victory, with Warner named Player of the Match after becoming the first Australian to make a double-century in their 100th Test.

**1st Test, Brisbane**
**December 17-18**
South Africa 152 (Verreynne 64; Lyon 3-14, Starc 3-41) & 99 (Zondo 36*; Cummins 5-42) v Australia 218 (Head 92; Rabada 4-76, Jansen 3-32) & 35-4
**Australia won by 6 wickets**

**2nd Test, Melbourne**
**December 26-29**
South Africa 189 (Jansen 59, Verreynne 52; Green 5-27) & 204 (Bavuma 65; Lyon 3-58) v Australia 575-8dec (Warner 200, Carey 111, Smith 85, Head 51, Green 51*; Nortje 3-92)
**Australia won by an innings and 182 runs**

**3rd Test, Sydney**
**January 4-8**
Australia 475-4dec (Khawaja 195*, Smith 104, Labuschagne 79, Head 70) v South Africa 255 (Maharaj 53; Hazlewood 4-48, Cummins 3-60) & 106-2 f/o (Erwee 42*)
**Match drawn**

**Australia won the series 2-0**

PHOTO BY WILLIAM WEST

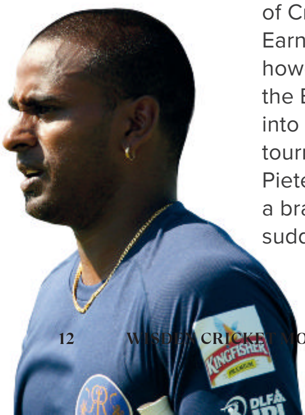
THE
**Top Six**
*The month in cricket*
**No.2**

# IPL bidding war shows the lofty standing of English talent

With England cricketers attracting the highest bids in December's IPL auction, and in high demand across the franchise circuit in general, Andrew Miller argues the often-maligned county game is proving its worth on a global scale

ANDREW
MILLER

*Wisden Cricket Monthly* columnist, UK editor of *ESPNcricinfo* and former editor of *The Cricketer*
@miller_cricket



BELOW: Dimitri Mascarenhas was the only England player to take part in the inaugural IPL in 2008

Despite a Bazball-inspired *annus mirabilis* that delivered nine Test wins in 10, and a T20 World Cup victory that seemed to float in on a tide of good vibes, the most significant moment of England's seminal 2022 arguably came on the day after their on-field efforts had been concluded.

Admittedly, the random enrichment of a select few athletes is of less widespread interest than Jonny Bairstow's Trent Bridge blockbuster, or Ben Stokes' masterful marshalling of a win for the ages in Rawalpindi. Or even the fact that England, traditional white-ball under-achievers, are now the first men's team to hold both 50- and 20-over World Cups simultaneously. But as a means to hard-code the unfettered standards that England have suddenly set in motion, and to ensure that their conveyor belt of contenders keeps whirring on into the future, their new risk-reward ratio got its ultimate pay-off at the IPL auction in Kochi on December 22.

With a record 15 English players set to take part in the 2023 tournament, including each of the auction's top three picks – Ben Stokes, Harry Brook and Sam Curran, the most expensive signing in IPL history at £1.85million – it signals an end to the longest-running psycho-drama of the sporting century, and hints at another deeply suppressed truth too – that, for England's elite cricketers, playing in the tournament was never about having their cake and eating it, but about being allowed to ask for a slice in the first place.

The ECB's attitude to the IPL has shifted in recent years, and can be split roughly 50-50 between the Age of Crazed Suspicion from 2008 to 2015, and the Age of Earnest Devotion from 2016 to the present day. This year, however, and for the first time in its history, the cream of the English game have been accepted on their own terms into the bosom of the world's most lucrative franchise tournament – not as renegades or emissaries, as Kevin Pietersen or Jos Buttler were, but as proven pioneers of a brand-new approach to the sport that franchise owners suddenly want a piece of.

Compare this current state of affairs to the madness that greeted the inaugural IPL season, 15 long years ago. England, as it happened, were on tour in New Zealand when the maiden auction took place in February 2008, jealously looking on as Brendon McCullum (that man again) landed a £580,000 payday while eating pizza in a motel in Napier. Three of his ODI teammates also received life-changing deals that night, while anyone who was anyone from Australia's world-beating Test and ODI teams was also among the hottest tickets in town.

England's sole representative in 2008, by contrast, was Dimitri Mascarenhas, who was persuaded along for the ride by his mate Shane Warne, but played a solitary match for Rajasthan Royals in a grudgingly granted two-week window before being hauled back to Hampshire for the start of the English season. Within two months, Allen Stanford was landing his helicopter on the nursery ground at Lord's, armed with $20million and a preposterous plan to bribe England's elite players into compliance, and the rest is deeply humiliating history.

This time, England's cricketers have been welcomed as High Performers in the most literal sense, outsourced beneficiaries of a more laissez-faire attitude to elite-level cricket that the rest of the world got its head around several years before the ECB – not least New Zealand, serial World Cup contenders since time immemorial, for whom the reaction of their former CEO Justin Vaughan to that original auction remains instructive. "It made people realise there really was a pathway to aim for," Vaughan said. "If you played well at first-class level you could play for the Black Caps. If you played well for the Black Caps, there was an opportunity to be picked up in the IPL."

And if that sounds as though the tail has been rewarded for wagging the dog, then it's probably time to check in on the ECB's official high-performance review, which was instigated by Andrew Strauss in the wake of last year's Ashes, tarred and feathered

PHOTO BY CATHERINE IVILL

> **The ECB's attitude to the IPL has shifted in recent years, and can be split roughly 50-50 between the Age of Crazed Suspicion from 2008 to 2015, and the Age of Earnest Devotion from 2016 to the present day. This year, however, and for the first time in its history, the cream of the English game have been accepted on their own terms into the bosom of the world's most lucrative franchise tournament**

ABOVE: Sam Curran, Player of the Tournament at the recent T20 World Cup, was purchased by Punjab Kings for £1.85m, making him the most expensive player in IPL history

by the counties in the wake of its publication, and is now left looking even more ropey by the joyous anarchy of Bazball, and its inherent distrust of such an exhaustively drawn-out process.

None of what occurred in 2022 makes the reframing of England's domestic structure any less urgent. But the fact that a change of mindset can have such a dramatic bearing on England's Highest Performance cannot be ignored. The sport's "tectonic plates" are already shifting, as Strauss evocatively described the T20 league era, and this month, we're braced for perhaps the biggest Richter-scale reading yet, with the IPL-affiliated SA20 and ILT20 tournaments set to bleed directly into their parent event in April.

Is an acceptance of these new realities – even a surrender to them – the solution that's been hiding in plain sight? The county system, after all, has always been a feeder system, traditionally for the needs of the England team, but this winter, with more than 70 players – one fifth of the county payroll – employed across nine franchise tournaments, from the Abu Dhabi T10 to the Nepal T20 League, it's increasingly becoming a feeder for the sport as a whole.

What does it matter if, through the breadth of opportunity that comes from the 18-county system, the raw materials are not automatically of the highest global standard? Surely the lesson of the past seven years, most recently extolled through Brook's PSL-informed performances in Pakistan but also in the thrilling emergence of Rehan Ahmed after just three Championship appearances for lowly Leicestershire, is that the best players will be identified on whatever stage they can first appear, and cricket's global market will do the rest.

And whether or not that market includes The Hundred – which was conceived by the previous ECB regime as the means to keep some skin in this changing global game – the wider that footprint remains at county level, the more raw materials there will be for global moulding. As the vibe of 2022 proved beyond reasonable doubt, cricket is a mighty simple game when you stop fretting and just go with the flow. ■

THE
Top Six
*The month in cricket*
No.3

# Team of the Month

Jo Harman selects a side of the best performers from the last month's action including three representatives from England's triumphant tour of Pakistan

**80.86**
Travis Head's batting strike rate in Test cricket in 2022

### 1. Ishan Kishan
**India**

Drafted in for the final match of a series India had already lost to Bangladesh, Kishan became the seventh man to score an ODI double-century, blitzing 210 from 131 deliveries to propel his team to a thumping victory. With his opening partner Shikhar Dhawan falling for a sixth single-figure score in nine innings, the loyalty of the Indian selectors is being tested. Kishan, who is 13 years Dhawan's junior, will surely have the opportunity to make an opening spot his own ahead of the World Cup in October.

### 2. Ben Duckett
**England**

Having waited six years for a Test recall, Duckett seized his opportunity by racing to a maiden century shortly after lunch on day one of England's series in Pakistan. His partnership with Zak Crawley – 233 in 35.4 overs of carnage – set the tone for what followed as the Notts left-hander went on to rattle off a brace of fifties in the second Test at Multan and a 78-ball 82* to seal the whitewash at Karachi. Selected primarily for his prowess against spin, Duckett has now earned the chance to show he can be a long-term opener in all conditions.

### 3. Travis Head
**Australia**

The Aussie southpaw now averages 57.40 from 22 home Tests after an exceptional red-ball international summer in which he passed 50 in five of his six completed knocks. Head was brutal against an insipid Windies, making 99 at Perth and then cruising to a career-best 175 at Adelaide, and he continued his hot streak versus South Africa's more potent attack with a trio of rapid half-centuries in a comprehensive series win.

### 4. Harry Brook
**England**

A hugely productive month in the life

*Team selected on performances from December 1 to January 8*

of an emerging superstar. Brook, who turns 24 in February, was named Player of the Series in Pakistan after hitting centuries in all three Tests, each innings showing off his class and swagger. A few days after the conclusion of the series, the Yorkshireman became £1.3million richer after a three-way IPL bidding war ended with Sunrisers Hyderabad securing his signature.

### 5. Saud Shakeel

**Pakistan**

It's been a disappointing home season for Pakistan, who were whitewashed by England and very nearly beaten by New Zealand, but the emergence of Shakeel to solidify their middle order is a welcome development. Old-school in his approach, the 27-year-old left-hander was unflustered by the fireworks exploding off English bats and stuck to his own game, patiently accumulating four half-centuries in his debut series. In the contest that followed against the Kiwis he made another fifty in the first Test before notching an unbeaten 125 at Karachi which ultimately saved his side from defeat.

### 6. Sarfaraz Ahmed (wk)

**Pakistan**

It came as a shock when Mohammad Rizwan was axed from the Test side following the defeat to England but Sarfaraz, recalled to the team after nearly four years in the wilderness, repaid the faith of the selectors. He was in superb touch against the Black Caps, making scores of 86, 53, 78 and 118 to be named Player of the Series. The 35-year-old said he rated his match-saving hundred at Karachi as his best innings for Pakistan.

### 7. Mehidy Hasan

**Bangladesh**

The sparky all-rounder started December by spearheading Bangladesh's shock ODI series win against India and finished it by very nearly bowling his side to a famous Test victory over the same opponents. In the 50-over series, Mehidy held his nerve with an unbeaten 38* in the opener at Mirpur to steer Bangladesh to a one-wicket win and then made a scintillating 100* from 83 balls – becoming only the second player to score an ODI hundred from No.8 or lower – to post a target which was just out of India's reach. The 25-year-old off-spinner followed that by collecting 11 wickets in the two-Test series including 5-63 in the fourth innings at Mirpur as the visitors snuck home by three wickets.

### 8. Charlie Dean

**England**

Still only 22, the off-spinning all-rounder is looking increasingly assured at international level and proving an excellent foil for her spin partner Sophie Ecclestone. Dean was the standout performer on England's one-sided tour of the Caribbean, picking up seven wickets in the ODI series and then impressing with 3-22 on her T20I debut. She completed the short-format series with 11 wickets at an average of just 5.90 and now appears a shoo-in for England's T20 World Cup opener against the Windies on February 11.

### 9. Ollie Robinson

**England**

Robinson served up a seam-bowling masterclass on Pakistani pitches which offered very little, playing in all three Tests – a significant development considering the criticism levelled at him for poor fitness levels in the past – and taking wickets at crucial times, most notably in the series opener at Rawalpindi where he was named Player of the Match for his fourth-innings haul of 4-50.

### 10. Henry Thornton

**Adelaide Strikers**

The 26-year-old fast bowler was at the heart of an extraordinary Big Bash match in which Sydney Thunder were bowled out for just 15 in 5.5 overs, the lowest-ever total in a professional T20 match. Bowling with good pace and finding extravagant movement, Thornton struck twice in his opening over, once in his second and then twice more in his third to return figures of 2.5-1-3-5. It was almost too much to compute. "I honestly cannot believe what just happened," he said. "I feel like I need to retire now. I don't think I'm getting better than that." He continued his good form to take 16 wickets from his first seven matches in the tournament.

### 11. Abrar Ahmed

**Pakistan**

The unassuming, bespectacled leggie burst onto the scene against England, taking 11 wickets on debut at Multan (including the first seven to fall in the first innings) and then picking up six more at Karachi. No Pakistani in history had taken as many wickets in their first two Tests. The 24-year-old claimed 11 more in the two-Test series against the Kiwis to announce himself as a player to keep a close eye on in 2023. ■

THE
**Top Six**
*The month in cricket*
**No.4**

# Believe the Ashes hype – it's needed more than ever

With the rapid expansion of T20 leaving Test cricket in a precarious position, Adam Collins says this summer's men's Ashes series will provide a golden opportunity to unite around the longer format which we can't afford to waste

ADAM
COLLINS
*Wisden Cricket Monthly*
Australia correspondent
**@collinsadam**

When padding up to write this column, consecutive tweets jumped out from my timeline. One was from the new South African T20 competition, the mini-IPL, expressing excitement about its opening day – hashtagging a betting shop, of course. The next was a piece from *The Age* newspaper in Australia quoting ICC chair Greg Barclay with his low-key concession that "not everybody is going to be able to play Test cricket" in the future.

The link here should be obvious to anyone who was paying attention through 2022, as IPL owners set about seizing pretty much any asset going – a pattern we can expect to continue, for instance, when the ECB eventually sells The Hundred to the highest bidder. These transactions put the form of the game that soaks up the most time in the calendar in the firing line and, with the exception of Australia and England, who make their millions from TV deals underpinned by Test cricket, act as a drag on the balance sheet of many Full Member nations.

BELOW: Australia haven't won an Ashes series in England since Steve Waugh's side won 4-1 in 2001

It seems so incongruous that this latest existential threat is emerging at the very same time that Test cricket is giving us so much – not least from England. To think that sentence comes so naturally when, only a year ago, Joe Root's desolate men were wandering the streets of Hobart after a three-day hiding to end the least competitive Ashes series of my lifetime.

Ahead of that turgid affair, in these pages I urged my colleagues to lay off the Ashes hype that was plainly undeserved. Well, in 2023 let's go the other way and go full 2005 in terms of the build-up. England's Bazballers against Pat Cummins' pitch-perfect pace attack. Ben Stokes and co pledging to do it their way. Australia's elders smirking as one: good luck doing that against our blokes. All of this.

On the Australian response to Bazball, I interviewed various players during their defeat of the West Indies in Perth, which played out at the same time as England's Rawalpindi Miracle. Needless to say, they'd been watching after hours. Not long after Cummins' side had wrapped up their own win, Stokes declared leaving Pakistan to chase 343 in four sessions. Some of those Australian players having a beer couldn't believe the cheek of it. This was the ground where, nine months earlier on a surface just as benign, Australia had conceded 252-0 in two sessions on the final day. As it turned out, Stokes had judged the situation perfectly.

It stands to reason the Aussies can't quite come to terms with what they're seeing given the rabble they demolished at their last meeting. But it makes their mission to win in England for the first time since 2001 all the more compelling. As seen in the new series of the Amazon documentary, *The Test*, they remain furious they weren't able to achieve that in 2019 (despite retaining the Ashes). That it follows a trip to India, where they haven't triumphed since 2004, and in all probability a World Test Championship

PHOTO BY DAVID GRAY

> **It stands to reason the Aussies can't quite come to terms with what they're seeing given the rabble they demolished at their last meeting. But it makes their mission to win in England for the first time since 2001 all the more compelling**

final, makes it true final-frontier business for a number of senior players on or nearing their last laps.

Ah yes, the World Test Championship. It was at the Edgbaston Ashes Test of 2019 where the new competition commenced. Back then, the biggest conversation around it was that numbers would appear on the backs of players' shirts. But while acknowledging Covid's intervention, I'm more certain by the week that we are going to look back on this as something of a golden era for Test cricket. Sure, the WTC is far from faultless, and the proliferation of two-match series (to satisfy the competition's minimum requirement) has been a drag. But it has guaranteed that Test cricket is being played, between nine participants, pretty much constantly.

It'll be at Birmingham again this year that the new cycle begins – one of two that have been guaranteed in the Future Tours Programme. With the rapidly expanding T20 landscape, the WTC is on trial right now. It might already be too late. Why would IPL owners, with all the clout they enjoy, allow so many months of the year to be compromised by the Test schedule? The grim Australian Test summer felt like a harbinger of things to come, with the West Indies and South Africa uncompetitive – the latter playing just four Tests this year and not taking part in a three-Test series until 2026. But finally, at least, attention is being paid to the looming threat.

Stokes and Brendon McCullum have been clear since taking over that their mission extends well beyond wins and losses, to make Test cricket as attractive as possible. For Cummins' part, he's on the record saying he wants to be part of a world where a dozen nations play the longer format, not half that. Beyond the Ashes itself, these two teams have the chance to do something special in 2023: win hearts and minds across the cricket world. Build the hype; believe the hype. ■

ABOVE: Australia's home Test summer was a one-sided affair, with comfortable victories over South Africa and West Indies failing to capture the imagination

THE
**Top Six**
*The month in cricket*
**No.5**

# New PCB boss steps back into the breach

In an exclusive interview, Najam Sethi tells William Dobson why he's returning to the chairmanship of the Pakistan Cricket Board

WILLIAM DOBSON

**Bookseller and freelance writer based in Beirut**

BELOW: Najam Sethi is on to his fourth stint as boss of the Pakistan Cricket Board

RIGHT: Shahid Afridi is Pakistan's new interim selector

The first time I met Najam Sethi was in March 2022, at a dinner party in Lahore. By way of introduction, Sethi took a long sip of his drink, chuckled and told his audience that he was taking an evening off from bringing down Imran Khan's government.

There's a warmth to Sethi which belies his seriousness. He's quick to laugh and, when he does, he does so deeply and with ease. Two days after our meeting, a vote of no confidence removed Khan from power.

Now, with Khan gone, Sethi is back in charge of the PCB, at the behest of Pakistan's current prime minister Shehbaz Sharif, for his fourth stint in the last 10 years. We are meeting to discuss his latest appointment, but while it's for this role that Sethi will best be known, this is just one of many hats he has worn in a remarkable career.

Predominantly a journalist by profession – "the only one in South Asia to have received three international freedom awards in a decade", he says – he has also been the caretaker chief minister of Punjab Province and served in Pakistan's federal cabinet.

Sethi abandoned the comforts of a Cambridge PhD "to join the struggle of the Baloch and Pashtun for their constitutional provincial rights", a move which saw him spend three years in prison under Zulfikar Bhutto – one of three occasions when he was deemed by Amnesty International to be a prisoner of conscience.

He's also lived for a number of years under 24/7 police protection due to legitimate threats on his life from the Taliban. It is something he describes as a "hazard of journalism" before adding, with a typical chuckle, "things are much better now I've left the media to join the PCB… I imagine I won't be upsetting anyone in particular". Except perhaps, he adds mischievously, "my friend Ramiz Raja".

This schism, with Ramiz's contentious removal as chairman, has dominated the narrative around Sethi's latest appointment and, for those on Raja's side, it is being presented either as a PCB coup d'état or a grace-and-favour gift for backing the PM Sharif over Imran.

He refutes this with absolute conviction. "I really had no interest in becoming a cricket administrator, but I was thrust into it by a quirk of fortune, or misfortune you might say. Cricket is far more important to most Pakistanis than the politics. We eat, drink and smell cricket all the time. It's played in every nook and corner. It's a passion comparable to football in Brazil. That we've also done quite well at it is a huge matter of pride.

"This is public service. Most people think it's a plush job. That it's a reward for something. But believe you-me, I'm working 18 hours a day. And my position is that I created something that I see threatened now by ruination. It's time I went back and put it back on its feet."

It's hard to argue with Sethi's previous record in the role. It was under his stewardship that elite cricket

> We haven’t really developed democratic institutions in Pakistan but we’ll continue struggling to do so. The PCB is just another example of that

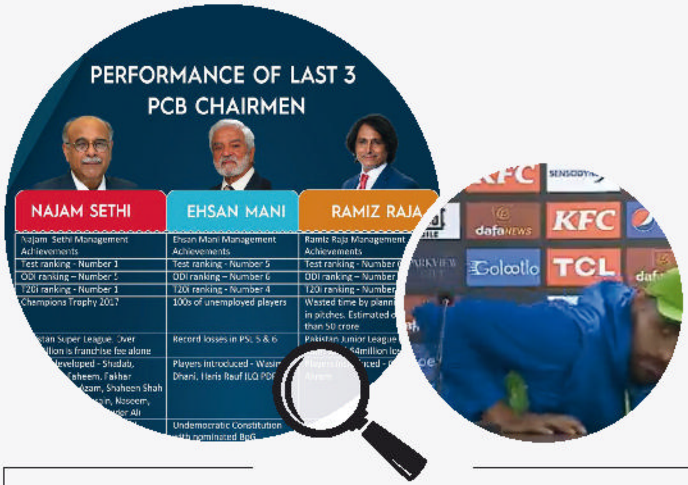
returned to Pakistan after almost 10 years in the wilderness, first through the Pakistan Super League and then the return of international touring sides.

Indeed, while others had thought that a T20 league would only work if played in the host country, Sethi had the foresight to launch the PSL in the UAE as a prelude to persuading the necessary individuals to return.

He recalls a moment from the inaugural tournament when two senior military commanders slipped into the VIP box. “I still remember their words. They said, ‘Mr Sethi. This is not cricket we are watching. This is a great showpiece, and we will give you all the support you need if you want to bring cricket back to Pakistan. This is what we want the world to see.’”

Inspired by this, and the subsequent successful return of the PSL to Pakistan, he flew to Colombo to meet the Sri Lankan board and said to them: “During the civil war in Sri Lanka, the Pakistan cricket team came and played when no other team was prepared to take the risk. We kept cricket going in Sri Lanka. It’s time for you to forgive us and to come back.” They did.

Born the year after Pakistan’s creation, Sethi has dedicated his life advocating for democracy. While he’s now taking a step back from commenting on politics, he doesn’t see this as a change of heart. “We haven’t really developed democratic institutions in this country but we’ll continue struggling to do so. The PCB is just another example of that.” ■



PERFORMANCE OF LAST 3 PCB CHAIRMEN

| NAJAM SETHI | EHSAN MANI | RAMIZ RAJA |
|---|---|---|
| Najam Sethi Management Achievements | Ehsan Mani Management Achievements | Ramiz Raja Management Achievements |
| Test ranking - Number 1 | Test ranking - Number 5 | Test ranking - Number |
| ODI ranking – Number 5 | ODI ranking – Number 6 | ODI ranking – Number |
| T20i ranking - Number 1 | T20i ranking - Number 4 | T20i ranking - Number |
| Champions Trophy 2017 | 100s of unemployed players | Wasted time by planni in pitches. Estimated than 50 crore |
| stan Super League. Over llion is franchise fee alone | Record losses in PSL 5 & 6 | Pakistan Junior League $4million lo |
| eveloped - Shadab, Faheem, Fakhar Azam, Shaheen Shah ain, Naseem, der Ali | Players introduced - Wasim Dhani, Haris Rauf ILQ PDF | |
| | Undemocratic Constitution with nominated BoG | |

# NEWS CYCLE

Grab the popcorn, Pakistan cricket is in crisis, writes Ben Gardner

ISSUE 64 February 2023

The problem with getting into a mud-slinging contest is, even if you do end up winning, you’re going to end up looking a bit dirty. The PCB’s latest game of musical chairs (get it?) concluded with Najam Sethi appointed to lead the governing body for a fourth stint, and, not unlike his new interim selector Shahid Afridi, he played his shots from the off.

A New Year’s Eve treat arrived in the form of a tweeted infographic, listing everything he felt he’d done well in his first three goes, as well as everything his predecessors/successors had got wrong. He was particularly severe on Ramiz Raja, describing his reign as a “dictatorship” and, without a hint of irony, declaring that he had overseen “infighting at its peak”.

Sethi also highlighted a smattering of desk detritus Raja had allegedly left behind, claiming that he had avoided attempts to be reunited with his clutter. Given the items amounted to little more than a small plastic basketball and a novelty tin of shortbread, it is possible he just wasn’t bothered. In any case, Raja can hardly be blamed if he wants to leave everything behind him, with overseeing his country’s cricket often seeming like a distraction from his twin passions of being a commentator and a YouTube personality. At least his show, *Ramiz Speaks*, has now become appointment viewing.

If you think it’s hard being an administrator, spare a thought for those in the dressing room, with Pakistan’s pre- and post-match press conferences now akin to being put in the stocks for half an hour, the assorted media launching barbed invective as opposed to rotten tomatoes. One noted Babar Azam critic, Shoaib Jatt, grew increasingly upset after being passed over for questions, with an end-of-session outburst leading to a withering look from the big man himself.

When Jatt did get a chance to have his say, he wasn’t going to let it pass. “It’s the opinion of the entire nation of Pakistan, they think Pakistan did not bowl well,” was his initial offering to fast-bowling coach Shaun Tait. “You’re answering the question before you ask it,” came Tait’s reply. When the inquiry did eventually come unadorned by any commentary, the Wild Thing’s response was short and pointed: “Yes, I am satisfied.”

But sleep easy, Pakistan fans. Bitching, bickering and bad results is a time-honoured tradition, and in a World Cup year, it can only mean one thing: Babar’s men are coming for the crown. ■

# Teenage kicks – so hard to beat?

Following Rehan Ahmed's stirring Test debut at Karachi, Lawrence Booth considers the benefits or otherwise of throwing teenagers into the heat of battle at the top level

LAWRENCE
BOOTH

*Wisden Cricketers' Almanack* editor and *Daily Mail* writer
@the_topspin

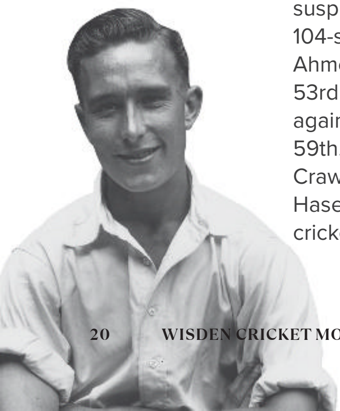
RIGHT: Rehan Ahmed returned second-innings figures of 5-48 in England's win at Karachi in December

BELOW: Denis Compton is one of only eight men to play Test cricket for England before turning 20

> “Our system is set up to reward the apprentice, not the protégé. Don't get ahead of yourself. Runs and wickets on the circuit, and your time will come. Other countries have traditionally been less shy about pushing youth forward, especially in Asia

Nothing says the passing of time quite like the arrival of a young cricketer. When England selected the Leicestershire leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed (aged 18 years 126 days) for the third Test against Pakistan at Karachi shortly before Christmas, it was quickly noted that he had not even been born when James Anderson made his own Test debut, back in 2003. Youth ages us. It can also be illuminating.

English cricket has tended to treat youngsters with a suspicion usually reserved for, well, leg-spinners. On the 104-strong list of male Test debutants aged under 19, Ahmed is the first to feature from England – way down in 53rd. Brian Close (18 years 149 days when he was picked against New Zealand at Old Trafford in 1949) is next, in 59th. There is no other Englishman. Only six others – Jack Crawford, Ian Peebles, Denis Compton, Ben Hollioake, Haseeb Hameed and Sam Curran – have played Test cricket for England before turning 20.



On the flipside – and this part is equally predictable – 13 of the 20 oldest Test cricketers are English. Wilfred Rhodes is in pole position (52 years 165 days against West Indies in Jamaica in 1930), and WG Grace is third (50 years 320 days against Australia at Trent Bridge in 1899, when the crowd mocked him for his unathletic fielding).

Our system is set up to reward the apprentice, not the protégé. Don't get ahead of yourself. Runs and wickets on the circuit, and your time will come. Other countries have traditionally been less shy about pushing youth forward, especially in Asia. Of the 52 names above Ahmed, 19 are from Pakistan, eight each from Bangladesh and India, and three each from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. Even taking into account a less formal approach to birth certification in rural areas of the subcontinent, the culture clash is clear. Cricket is a better root to stardom in Asia than in England, and society more achievement-oriented; family-support networks are strong. If you're good enough in Asia, you're young enough.

England, though, are not alone in their conservatism. The only Australian in the top 52 is Ian Craig (17 years 239 days), and Daniel Vettori (18 years 10 days) is the sole New Zealander. And in the full list of 104, there is a lone South African: frog-in-a-blender Paul Adams (18 years 340 days).

An early debut is no guarantee of anything, and even the best can feel unsure. When Sachin Tendulkar (16 years 205 days) won his first cap against Pakistan at Karachi in 1989, he struggled against Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis (another debutant, at 17 years 364 days). "I began to doubt my ability to bat," he said, "and questioned whether I was ever going to be good enough to play at the international level." In the next game, he was hit in the face by a Waqar bouncer. Bloodied but unbowed, he declared: "*Main khelega* [I will play]." And he did, rather well, for the next 24 years.

Yes, there have been success stories. Garry Sobers (17 years 245 days) began his Test career as a No.9 in a heavy defeat by England in Jamaica, which proved no impediment. Hanif Mohammad (17 years 300 days) became one of the most immovable opening batters in history. Arjuna Ranatunga (18 years 78 days) led Sri Lanka to a World Cup title. But the record-holder, Pakistan batter Hasan Raza (14 years 227 days, a number later called into question), faded into obscurity; Bangladesh seamer Mohammad Sharif (15 years 128 days) finished with a Test bowling average of 79 and a batting average of 7; and Indian spinner Laxman Sivaramakrishnan (17 years 118 days) waned in the same series in which he first waxed, against England in 1984/85.

Craig, meanwhile, became Australia's youngest Test captain, amid comparisons to Don Bradman, but caught hepatitis, averaged below 20, and finished as a managing director at Boots. Of all those on the list, he remains the most cautionary tale.

How, then, to ensure youth is not wasted on the young? England's head coach Brendon McCullum suggested before the first Test in Pakistan that Rehan Ahmed was "nowhere near the finished article". He added: "But what's the alternative? Leave him in a system which may not come through necessarily as the product you'd hope for in the end? … We believe we can help get his talent through quicker."

They were comments that could have come only from an outsider. Had they been made by an Englishman, they would have been regarded as blasphemy. Clearly, Ahmed has to hone his trade. But McCullum was on to something. Young talent needs nurturing, and the early track record of the McCullum-Stokes era suggests man-management is among their greatest strengths.

It also explains why Ahmed, despite the euphoria of his five-for at Karachi, was not picked for England's next Test tour, to New Zealand in February. The management wanted to give him a chance to sample the life of a white-ball franchise cricketer. They didn't want to rush him into the Test arena, either.

England are intent on polishing their gem, not taking it on a world tour. All things being equal, there will be plenty of time for that. ■

# Quick Singles

## The month's news in brief

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

**1** Alice Capsey has been named in England's squad for the Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa in February despite breaking her collarbone at the end of last year. Head coach Jon Lewis said he wanted to give the 18-year-old all-rounder "every possible chance" of taking part in the tournament. Freya Kemp, the 17-year-old seamer, misses out after suffering a stress fracture in her back.

**2** Shane Burger has left his position as Scotland men's head coach to take on a new role as assistant coach and lead batting coach at Somerset. The 40-year-old South African had been in the post since March 2019 and oversaw Scotland's qualification for the Super 12s of the 2021 T20 World Cup.

**3** New Zealand took a share of the spoils from their two-Test series in Pakistan, with both matches ending in a draw. The Kiwis almost took the series in the final session of the second Test at Karachi but a century from the recalled Sarfaraz Ahmed held them at bay before a last-wicket stand between Naseem Shah and Abrar Ahmed denied the tourists the final scalp they needed for victory. The series was New Zealand's first since Kane Williamson stood down as Test captain, with Tim Southee replacing him.

**4** Russell Domingo has stood down as the head coach of Bangladesh's men's team with immediate effect. The South African had been in the role since September 2019. "We are likely to have two coaches," said Jalal Yunus, the BCB's cricket operations chairman. "One for T20s and another for Tests and ODIs. To bring the overall coaching on the right track, we will appoint a high-performance manager or director."

**5** Azhar Ali has retired from Test cricket, with the defeat to England at Karachi in December being his 97th and final appearance. The 37-year-old scored 7,142 runs at an average of 42.26 across his 13-year Test career, making him the fifth-highest run-scorer in Pakistan's history.

**6** Roland Butcher, the Barbados-born former England batter, has been appointed to the West Indies men's selection panel, joining lead selector Desmond Haynes and interim coach Andre Coley on the selection committee.

**7** South African all-rounder Dwaine Pretorius has retired from international cricket with immediate effect to "focus on T20 and other shorter formats". The 33-year-old made 27 ODI and 30 T20I appearances for the Proteas, as well as playing three Test matches. ■

## THE MEL FARRELL INTERVIEW

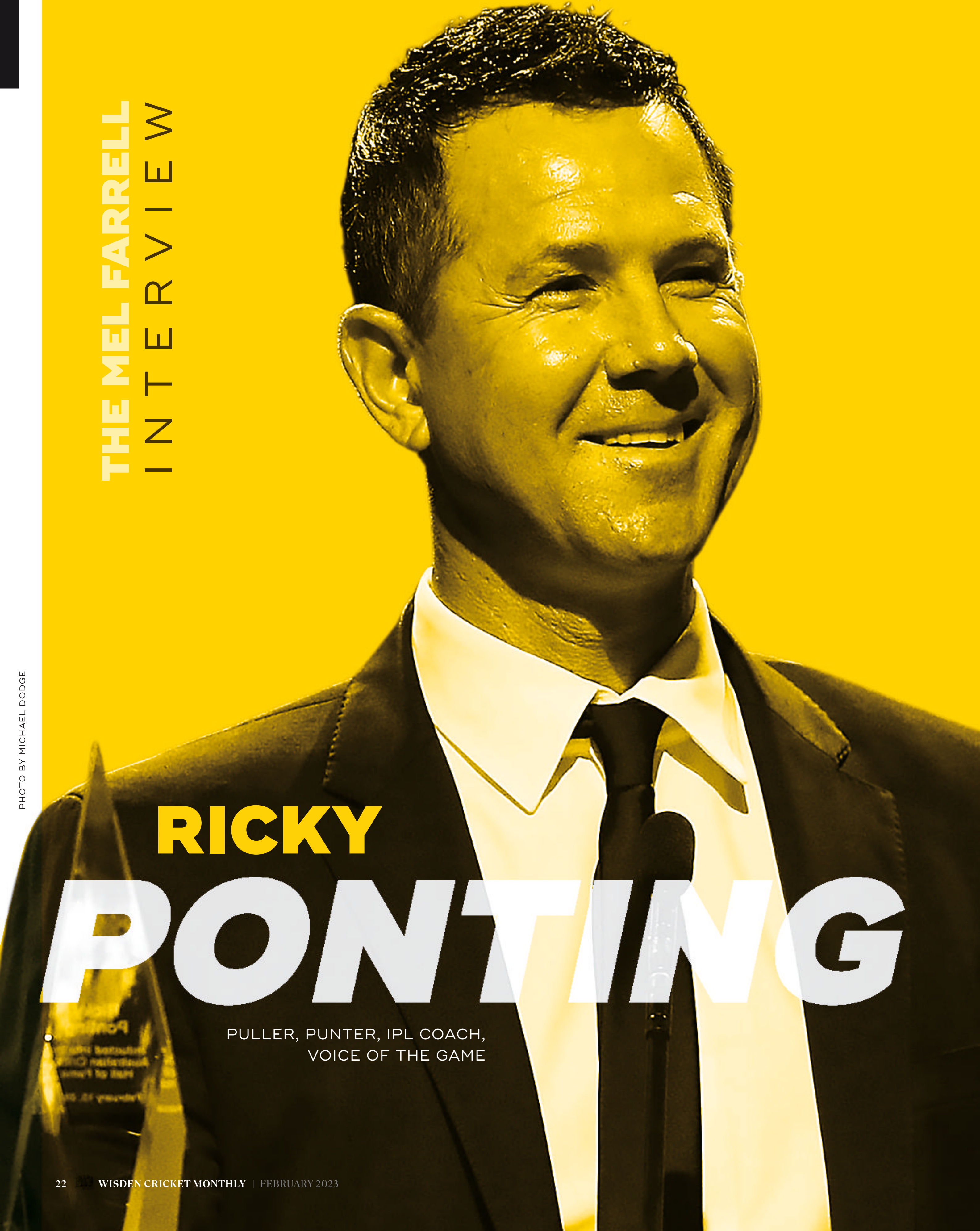


PHOTO BY MICHAEL DODGE

# RICKY PONTING

PULLER, PUNTER, IPL COACH,
VOICE OF THE GAME

MEL
FARRELL

Australian writer and broadcaster
@melindafarrell

Cricket's beating conscience talks to Mel Farrell about his hopes and fears for the game today and into the future

> “
> **The interesting thing is what England are going to do with the Ashes, because it seems to me that they need to have really good batting conditions to play that way**

Ricky Ponting leans forward, gazing intently through the large windows of the Bradman Noble Stand at the SCG, and admits his optimism about the future of Test cricket has taken a hit. The reason is the scene unfolding before him: Australian batters racking up a seemingly endless stream of runs and blasting out South Africa's top-order for fun.

The Australian Test summer has been glorious for those who enjoy watching the home side obliterate visitors but a little disappointing if you prefer competitive red-ball contests. After home victories over West Indies by 164 runs and 419 runs there was hope the South Africa series would provide more frisson; instead, two heavy defeats – by six wickets in two days in Brisbane and then a whopping innings and 182 runs in Melbourne – followed by a rain-drenched draw in Sydney in which South Africa were again on the ropes, has left Ponting concerned about Test cricket's prospects for the first time.

"I haven't been [worried] until now," he tells WCM. "I actually thought that this would be more of a contest than this series has been. I knew the way the West Indies one was going to go because you've seen that for long enough to know that was going to happen. Their first-class records are appalling, they're averaging in the 30s in first-class cricket and you're never going to make a jump from that and be a good Test player against an Australian team as good as this one. It just doesn't work that way."

The state of South Africa has been the deeper shock. "I've never been worried about Test cricket until I've seen this team here. Absolutely. People have been pointing fingers at T20 cricket, but every country is playing T20 cricket. It's not just one or two that are playing. I mean, England play more than anyone else and look at the Test cricket they're playing at the moment. So it can obviously have a really good, positive effect on Test cricket as well.

"The West Indies, you can trace that back 20 or 30 years, so you can understand their demise, but it's harder for me to understand South Africa being this. If that is the best group of players that they've got then I think it's an issue for the world game, for sure."

The former Australian captain's blunt assessments can seem almost brutal but his candour, spilling out in rapid-fire sentences as his thoughts form, means there is no wasted time in any discussion.

And, while Ponting is naturally happy to see a winning Australian Test team, he believes the time may have arrived for the ICC to intervene in shoring up Test cricket in countries where the format is struggling financially. The next Future Tours Programme sees South Africa play just 12 Tests in the next two years and 28 in the full four-year cycle, giving little opportunity for their batters in particular to gain valuable experience.

BELOW: On Justin Langer's departure: "A lot of people were pretty disappointed with the team"

"I think the obvious answer is trying to find a way for the ICC to fund some of these series," he says. "So it's not just the big ones playing against themselves, because these guys right now, the West Indies and South Africa, probably need the money more than ever. So you would think the governing body would get involved there and somehow try and help them out."

Australia's dominance over the home summer has quieted the negative headlines that have clung to the side for almost two years. Persistent murmurs of player unrest under former coach Justin Langer swirled even as Australia put England to the sword during the last Ashes series, a tour bookended by the unseemly end to Tim Paine's captaincy due to a sex scandal and Langer's own fractious departure.

Pat Cummins has become something of a culture war lightning rod thanks to his affinity with environmental causes, nicknamed 'Captain Woke' and 'Captain Carbon' by critics, while his perceived role in Langer's removal has been criticised by a significant number of high-profile former players, including several of Ponting's teammates. Added to the ongoing saga of David Warner's attempts to have his captaincy ban overturned – he eventually withdrew his case after disagreeing with Cricket Australia's process – and Australia's failure to make the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup, the culmination of negative headlines led to speculation the public had turned sour on the national men's sides.

Langer's inclusion in the Seven Network's commentary team alongside Ponting and Matthew Hayden ahead of the West Indies series intensified scrutiny but Ponting believes much of the noise was manufactured.

"I wasn't as vocal around some of that stuff as others were, but I think with the Justin situation, it was so easy to get 10 or 12 different opinions from all these… it was just easy to pick them off one at a time. I mean, wind Haydos up and go and get him three days in a row and write [what he says], so stories just kept going and going and going. Unfortunately, they mostly went back on Pat. He wasn't even the only captain at that stage. There was another captain of the T20 team and the 50-over team [Aaron Finch] that was probably as much involved as Pat was. So that was probably dragged out a lot more than it probably should have been.

"I don't think Cricket Australia handled that whole thing very well and they've got to take some of the responsibility for that. But I think deep down, and even some of the guys that I work with, a lot of them were pretty disappointed with the team and some of the things that were happening, some of the messages that were coming out. And what didn't make it any better was the way the T20 World Cup went because that was on the back of it all and that was just a disastrous tournament.

"That's why those issues become big things, because everything else is fine. And you've got to talk about something, right? That's probably why they become big things. Pat's thing I think was probably blown up a bit more than it needed to be. Davey's thing, that was a big deal as far as I was concerned. I just think it should have been overturned. Steve Smith has been able to captain Australia since [Sandpapergate]."

While Ponting has no problem dissecting the action on the field, he confesses he sometimes struggles to gauge public opinion. He took his son to the MCG for Australia's ODI against England post the T20 World Cup and was deeply troubled by the meagre crowd and has serious concerns about the scheduling and viability of the 50-over game. The modest attendances for the West Indies Test sparked similar concerns.

"It's just so hard to understand the public," he says. "Everyone's been asking me, 'Why did Australia not get very big crowds during the T20 World Cup? Why, when Australia are playing England in the one-dayers, were people not turning up? Why was there a small crowd in Perth for the first Test?'

"And people were saying that because of the attendances at the grounds. I think it looked like people were staying away and didn't want to watch the team but I just couldn't work out why because they've done a lot of things really well for a long time and are dominating these Test matches. I know Australians want to see a good contest, but they want to see Australia win as well and dominate, and that's what they've done.

PHOTO BY CAMERON SPENCER

"But the MCG Test for Seven rated higher than the Indian Test two years ago. Averaged over a million viewers a day through that game. So it's really hard to work out how you judge it. You would have thought the MCG Test against India would have been a massive one ratings-wise and it was lower than this year. Since we've had the rights to the first day of the Boxing Day Test, the Test against New Zealand [in 2019] has been the highest ratings day that we've had [outside the Ashes]. New Zealand and South Africa have been some of the highest rating ones so it's really hard to work out."

As Ponting pulls out ratings numbers with the same conviction that he reels off batting averages, his outlook appears to shift and some optimism returns.

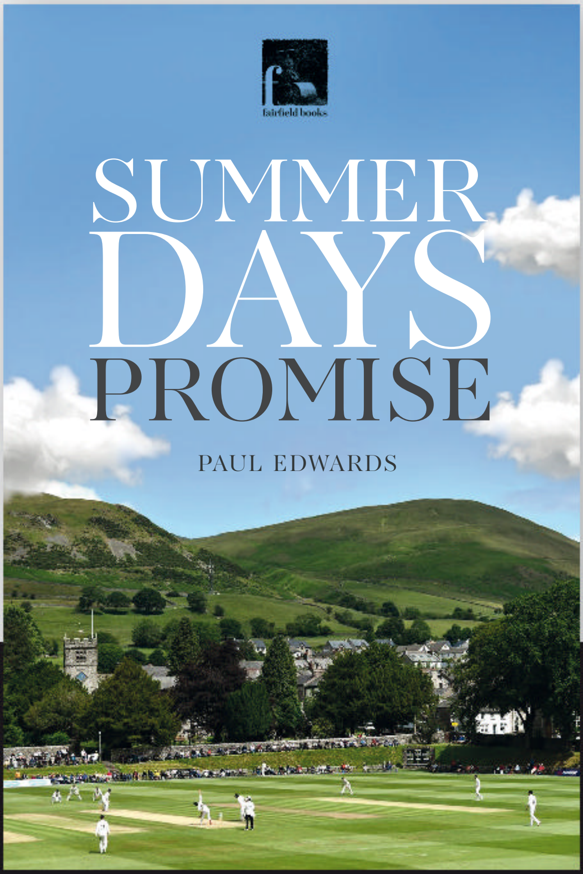
"I think there are a lot of really good rivalries in Test cricket now. This one [against South Africa] has grown, this rivalry is almost as fierce as an Ashes one. India and Pakistan will hopefully play a bit more against one another, New Zealand have been right up the top of the rankings the last couple of years, so I just think there's a lot of really good healthy things happening in the Test game. A lot of results. So there's good and bad but it just seems that what England are doing, what Australia's been able to do, there's been good, fun, entertaining Test cricket. So that's why I think it's healthy. I think if we're having a lot of drawn games and a lot of dead games, that's when I'll be worried about it. But it doesn't feel like that to me at the moment."

Australia's next Test challenge is the formidable one of attempting to reverse their last two home series defeats to India. They haven't won an away series against India since 2004 and Ponting believes batting will be key. While Australia's top five all produced innings of at least 175 runs at home this summer, the task of scoring in spinning conditions will be a far tougher assignment.

"I think it will be wicket dependent. If they get really ugly spinning conditions it might be difficult for them, knowing how well Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel and these guys bowl on those wickets. They're hard work. But we have got better and better, I reckon, playing in the subcontinent over the years.

"What those wickets do is actually make average spinners look really good. Axar Patel, he plays in my IPL team, lovely bloke and a good defensive bowler, but because he bowls fast finger-spin you get them on those wickets and they become unplayable, whereas if

ABOVE: Australia's dominance of South Africa has wider implications for the state of the world game, said Ponting after watching Usman Khawaja make 195* at Sydney

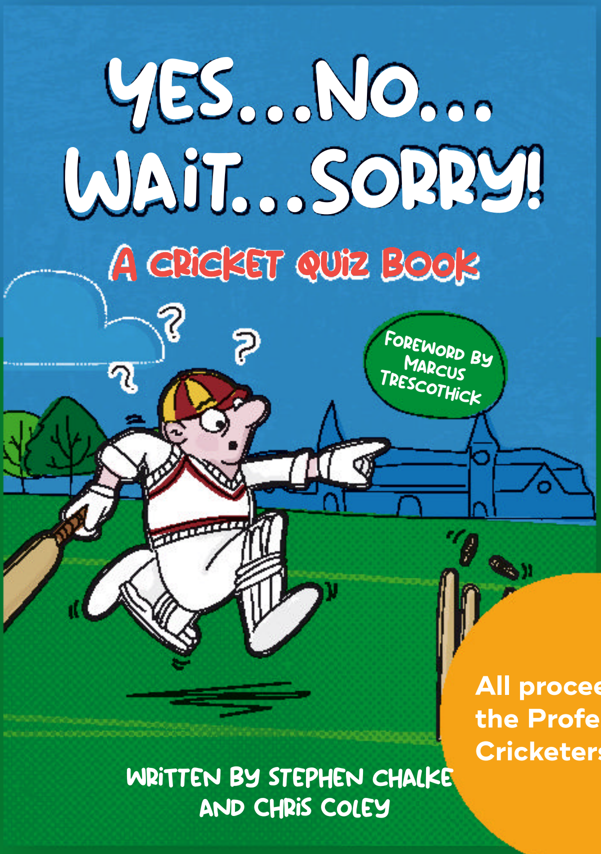

fairfield books
SUMMER DAYS PROMISE
PAUL EDWARDS

## SUMMER DAYS PROMISE

By Paul Edwards

A freelance cricket writer who contributes to a number of major cricket publications, Paul Edwards can express the moods and emotions of a day's play as well as anyone, and his range of interests beyond the boundary make his work distinctive and uniquely engaging. This is a collection of some of his very best writing.

Order now quoting offer code **FIELD2022** to get £3 off
THENIGHTWATCHMAN.NET
0203 696 5730 (9AM-5PM MON-FRI)
**~~£19~~ £16 + P&P**


YES...NO... WAIT...SORRY!
A CRICKET QUIZ BOOK
FOREWORD BY MARCUS TRESCOTHICK
WRITTEN BY STEPHEN CHALKE AND CHRIS COLEY

**All proceeds to the Professional Cricketers' Trust**

## TOUGHER THAN TEST CRICKET, MORE ENTERTAINING THAN T20

- 100 rounds of questions, full of fun and quirkiness
- 16 rounds set by the players themselves – from Broad & Anderson to Gooch & Gower
- 19 pictures rounds

**Order now at thecricketquizbook.co.uk**

you've got him on another wicket he'd never get you out in a Test match.

"I reckon they've got as good a chance as ever. Someone like Usman [Khawaja] has improved his play against spin. I think Travis [Head] will find it a little bit difficult in India. His record in the subcontinent suggests that. Davey's been a bit the same. If they can make enough runs they'll be competitive but that'll be the biggest challenge for them."

The India showdown begins in the second week of February. But the series that whets Ponting's appetite the most is the next men's Ashes, particularly in light of England's remarkable turnaround.

"If you think back to their team here last year, they had guys like [Rory] Burns and [Haseeb] Hameed and [Dom] Sibley, that just made cricket look too hard. You could tell that they weren't skilful enough to be long-term successful international players. Then what they've gone and done, [Ben] Duckett and [Zak] Crawley [above] and [Harry] Brook and these sort of guys, they're really talented ones."

Ponting sees echoes of the all-conquering Australian side at the height of his own career in the current England team, although he admits he's yet to see enough to give a considered view on Stokes' captaincy.

"It's probably not that different to us, to be honest. I think their scoring rate through the last 10 Tests has been about four runs an over [4.7 since the start of last summer], so that's probably a bit more dominant than what our group was, but then we had days where we made that many in a day. When you're a confident group that trusts one another, you can go out and express yourself in different ways. But you've got to have the people there that are willing to do that first, and those other guys I mentioned before – they wouldn't have been able to play that way. So Brendon's picked these guys knowing that they can do it and he's letting them go and do it.

"The interesting thing for me is what they're going to do with the Ashes next year because, if you think about the way that they've played, it seems to me they need to have really good batting conditions to play that way. But I'm not sure if that's the way they think they're going to beat Australia over there. I think they'll want James Anderson and Stuart Broad and others to be able to move the ball around but they won't be able to play that style of cricket against Australia if they've got conditions like that. So it's going to be interesting to see what they do. Saying that, they served up some pretty spicy ones against South Africa over their last series and that ended up working for them.

"For a long time I've been able to pretty much script how an Ashes series is going to go but you can't this time. Australia are clearly the best team in the world right now and England are doing what they're doing, and in Pakistan in flat, spinning conditions they found a way to win. So the intriguing thing for me will be what they serve up against the Aussies.

"Can they play this way against Australia? Is it sustainable against really good opposition? Well, we'll have to wait and see but that's the thing that excites me because there are so many questions unanswered."

In these enthusiastic musings, despite a life spent accumulating a vast well of knowledge about the game, Ricky Ponting is at his most relatable; just another lover of Test cricket, fascinated by its mystery and ultimately hopeful about its future.

## RICKY PONTING

**71**
International centuries – 40 Test, 31 ODI

**2**
Second-fastest to 12,000 Test runs, in 247 innings – Sangakkara got there in 224

**168**
Number of Tests in a career – the third-highest

**108**
Number of Test wins – 16 more than the second-highest, Shane Warne

**73**
Consecutive matches as captain – only Graeme Smith is in front of him

**3**
World Cup wins

> “There’s no skill involved. Just sneakiness and deceit. For that reason the ‘Mankad’ should have no place in the modern game
> PAUL NEWMAN

# RE:VIEW

Three writers tackle the thorny issue of the ‘Mankad’, considering the legitimacy of the dismissal and what it should be called

## BEN GARDNER

*Wisden.com managing editor*

I have little time for the debate around the rights and wrongs of the dismissal itself, which probably means I’m broadly in favour of it overall, even if the moralising on both sides is tiring. However, the law itself needs tidying up, because at the moment what it says and what it is in practice are in conflict. The law states: “If the non-striker is out of his/her ground at any time from the moment the ball comes into play until the instant when the bowler would normally have been expected to release the ball, the non-striker is liable to be run out.” With Adam Zampa’s attempted run out in the Big Bash recently, Melbourne Renegades’ Tom Rogers was out of his crease before Zampa’s arm was vertical, seemingly fulfilling the conditions for a run out to be possible. However, MCC’s intention, as was applied in the Zampa case, is that the whole run out must be completed before the arm reaches the vertical. It’s a small but important distinction, and it cost Sydney Thunder a wicket. Fraser Stewart, MCC’s laws manager, says a change is likely, and cricket is lucky, as a sport, to have lawmakers open to scrutiny and willing to accept when an issue presents itself. As for the terminology, ‘pre-delivery run out’ does the job just fine.

## PAUL NEWMAN

*Daily Mail cricket correspondent*

It’s just not a legitimate dismissal, is it? There’s no skill involved. Just sneakiness and deceit. For that reason the ‘Mankad’ should have no place in the modern game. Yes, I know it’s in the laws. And I think I’m in a minority. Certainly many of the judges I respect most have no issue with a bowler running out a non-striker when they back up too far. But I have always hated it. That’s why I was glad Adam Zampa got caught out trying to wrongly execute a ‘Mankad’ – and there was a recent suggestion from Australia that Vinoo’s family actually don’t mind his name being associated with this most rotten of dismissals – in the Big Bash. I was glad Zampa didn’t remove the bails until his arm was beyond the point when he would normally be expected to have released the ball. It showed up the whole business for what it is – a sorry excuse of a dismissal that should be outlawed. OK, if a batter is halfway down the pitch it might be a different story. But in the vast majority of cases they are not seeking to gain an unfair advantage. And when is the point when the bowler can be expected to release the ball anyway? The law is too woolly to be implemented properly. Yes, if a batter repeatedly transgresses then warn them – and, let’s be frank, there was no warning from Deepti Sharma when she ruined the end of a women’s international at Lord’s by ‘Mankading’ Charlie Dean; just ask the umpires on duty that day if you don’t believe me – but to run someone out without a warning is a cowardly way to gain a wicket. Let’s stop it before it spreads throughout the recreational and junior game – cricket is much, much poorer for the ‘Mankad’.

## JO HARMAN

*WCM magazine editor*

Is there a more tedious, energy-sapping debate in the game? The column inches it takes up (I’m aware of the irony here…), the fury it ignites on social media, the race to the moral high ground… *it’s all so incredibly dull*. When the latest controversy takes place and Cricket Twitter explodes – either apoplectic at the cheek of the bowler to have performed the dismissal, or apoplectic at the cheek of those who question the bowler’s moral fibre – I always wonder what everyone else is making of all this, if they’re unfortunate enough for it to cross their path; those sports fans who have a passing interest in cricket, who are perhaps considering giving it a proper crack. “So, hang on, a bowler has dismissed a batter, and it’s in the laws of the game, but they should have known better than to actually do it, because now they’re a cheat? And what exactly is ‘*The Spirit of Cricket*’?” It’s actually a bit embarrassing. We’re better than this. The debate over what it should be called is a slightly more interesting one. Should Vinoo Mankad be proud to have spawned this mode of dismissal (when he did for Bill Brown on India’s tour of Australia in 1947/48), or thoroughly ashamed at his cowardice. Unfortunately, that’s become a moot point. The whole debate is so boring that no man should have the misfortune of having their name attached to it. Batters, please just stay in your ground and spare us this monotonous merry-go-round. ■

# CRICKIPEDIA

## The alternative compendium of cricket

Words James Wallace

### Yips

A cruel affliction that can come out of nowhere and render a sportsperson useless at a skill they've spent their lives performing. Darts, snooker, golf and gymnastics all have their own particular versions of the dreaded yips, and cricketers are as prone as any to an attack. They create a sort of psychological blockage that causes a bowler to forget the basic elements of their action, resulting in them losing their radar or, in the most serious cases, preventing them even releasing the ball from their hand. What starts off as a sniggersome episode soon becomes an unrelenting and unbearable time loop for player and spectators alike. The yips are far from funny.

### Yorker

Is there a more pleasing or visceral sight in cricket than seeing a batter have their poles splattered by a searing yorker? You can keep your googlies, doosras and zooters – when it comes to primal thrills, the yorker is king. Wasim Akram, Lasith Malinga and Shoaib Akhtar were among the most lethal exponents of the delivery, using it to cause carnage even on the most lifeless of pitches. The origin of the term is disputed. Some claim that it originated in Yorkshire and is thus named after the bowlers that first whanged it down. Another theory is that it derived from the term 'york', used in the 19th century to describe a shrewd or cunning act, which would certainly fit nicely. A personal preference is the intriguing suggestion that it was inspired by a device used to tie trouser legs below the knee, known as a yorker – the dismissed batter often resembling someone who has had this act performed on them as their stumps lie in ruins.

### Yakka

Hard work, graft, toil – especially familiar to bowlers asked to charge in relentlessly, day after day, as former Middlesex seamer Simon Hughes vividly described in his 1998 memoir chronicling his time on the county circuit, *A Lot of Hard Yakka*. The term comes from the indigenous Australian word 'yaga', which means 'to work'.

### Yahoo

A wildly ambitious swipe deployed by a batter of erm, *lesser*, skill attempting to send the ball into the stratosphere but only connecting with fresh air. The finest example of such a stroke must surely be…

### 'Y did he do that?'

Now, you might be wondering why this didn't appear under W, but let's turn a blind eye to logic and reason so that one of the most brainless and hilarious pieces of cricket can be relived in this feature before it hands in its badge and gun next month.

It's 2017. West Indies and Pakistan are tied at 1-1 in their three-match series, and the final Test in Dominica has gone down to the wire. Roston Chase has batted all day to make 101* in what looks like a series-saving innings. With seven deliveries of the match remaining, all Shannon Gabriel needs to do is block the final ball of the penultimate over and leave Chase to do the rest. Then it's handshakes and a job well done. Yasir Shah tosses one up, more in hope than expectation. Gabriel's eyes light up, the No.11 unleashing an almighty yahoo which ricochets off his bat and onto the base of the stumps. Game gone. Series up in smoke. All that effort for nothing. Chase stands disbelieving at the non-striker's end. Stunned. Fazeer Mohammed's iconic commentary ("*WHY DID HE DO THAT?!*") summed up the thoughts of everyone watching. Why, why, why? (Or, in this case, Y, Y, Y?) ■

# Timed out: cricket and the climate crisis

Katya Witney talks to figures within the county game about the challenges their clubs face to combat the climate emergency

“Cricket is f***ing useless,” says Dr David Goldblatt. “It’s been so hopeless at getting on top of this. The ICC are short-term, myopic, ignorant fools. What the f*** are they thinking? Cricket is obviously going to be one of the most threatened sports in the world by climate change. I’m appalled by their attitude.”

Two years ago, Goldblatt, a sportswriter and academic, authored a report on the impact of the climate crisis on the future of global sport. His findings in ‘Playing against the clock: Global sport, the climate emergency and the case for rapid change’ read as pages of unremitting grimness. Intense heat will drive fans out of stands and force players to take refuge from the sun. Hurricanes and floods will decimate stadiums. Wildfires will fill them with smoke. It’s dystopian and depressing, and it’s happening now.

Earlier this year, flooding submerged a third of Pakistan’s landscape, displacing millions of people. In 2017, hurricanes caused serious damage to stadiums in the Caribbean. In 2019, Big Bash games took place under a haze of wildfire smoke.

“It’s time to get real,” Goldblatt tells WCM. “You want cricket? You want cricket for the next 30 years? We’re all going to have to think really hard about how we’re going to make this possible.”

The most glaring evidence and warning signs of climate change are currently most visible overseas. But Goldblatt’s report also lays bare the impact of environmental changes on county cricket. Five of the County Championship seasons in the last 10 years have lost at least 175 days of play across the entire competition. Glamorgan alone lost 1,300 hours of play between 2000 and 2016 – equivalent to 217 days in total. Sophia Gardens has been flooded six times.

Another club which knows all too well the difficulties that flooding can pose is Worcestershire, with New Road often submerged when the River Severn bursts its banks.

“It’s definitely becoming more frequent,” says the club’s facilities manager, Matthew Bottomer. “The amount of water that’s ended up coming is a hell of a lot more. Over the deepest side of the ground we can

KATYA WITNEY
Content executive for *Wisden.com*
@KatyaWitney

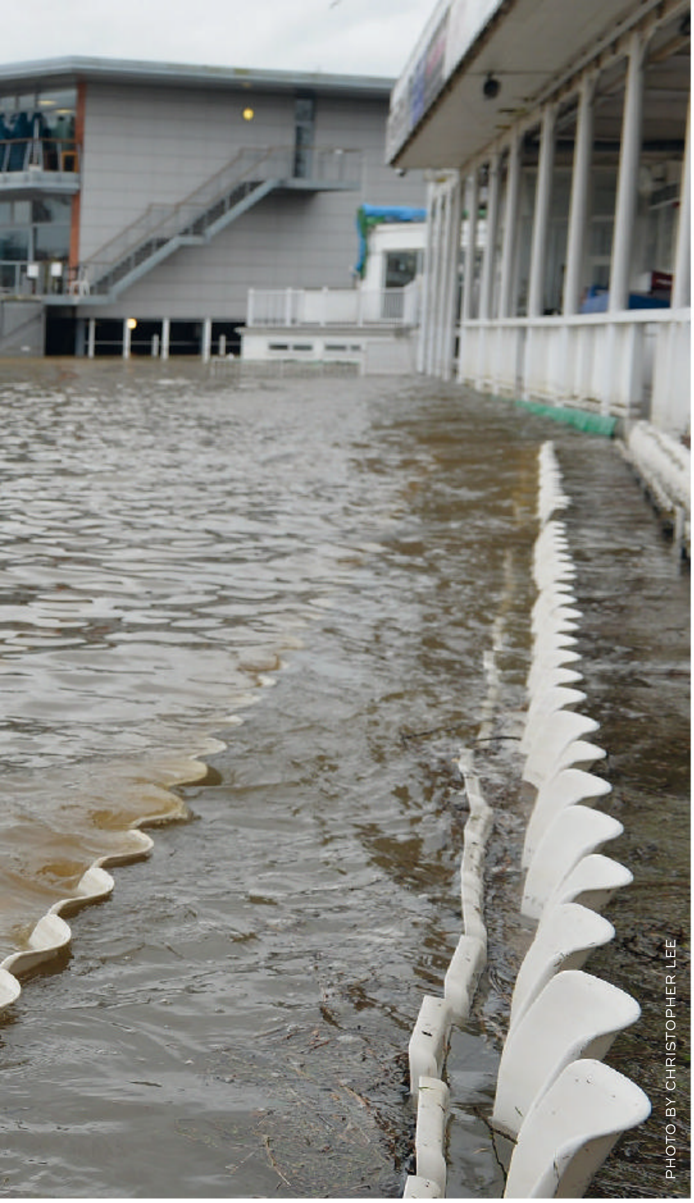


PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER LEE

LEFT: Worcestershire's New Road ground was submerged in 2014

BELOW: Matthew Potts suffered a heat-related illness on his ODI debut last summer as temperatures soared to 40 degrees

get about 15 feet of water and in the shallow end, if you want to call it that, we can get six or seven feet."

Not only has the increased flooding impacted Worcestershire's ability to host fixtures at the beginning of the season, it's also prevented them from taking basic steps to improve their sustainability, which other counties have long since implemented.

"I would love to try and introduce a vegetable patch to create our own produce but we can't do that because of the flooding," Bottomer says. "I would like to try and put vehicle charging points everywhere around the ground, but again they're just going to get absolutely ruined by the flood."

While increasing levels of rainfall is one problem, on the other end of the spectrum, the hottest UK summer on record in 2022 presented the game with a further headache. At Durham, the first ODI between England and South Africa was played in sweltering heat, which saw fans in the stadium suffering heatstroke and Matthew Potts, on his ODI debut, treated for a heat-related illness.

In the midst of that 40-degree heatwave, the ECB altered its playing conditions for the County Championship, cutting each session by half an hour and bringing the close of play forward to 4:30pm. One of the counties who made the decision to implement these changes was Gloucestershire, who were playing their home fixture against Hampshire in those blistering temperatures.

"Cricket is probably at the forefront of what impact climate change can have on playing sport," Gloucestershire chief executive Will Brown tells WCM. "And then if you take the example that extreme heat doesn't work for us, particularly when you take into account the layers of clothing and padding which players need to wear, that leaves you with a very narrow window of temperature and climate in which cricket can be played."

Gloucestershire can lay claim to being English cricket's greenest professional club, and one of the leading counties for implementing sustainable change into both their infrastructure and operations as a business. They are currently the only professional cricket club in the world to have joined Race for Zero, a United Nations-backed global campaign which aims at halving global emissions by 2030. Other notable signees include the International Olympic Committee, Tottenham Hotspur and Sky Sports.

"We're always asking: how do we educate people? How do we innovate?" says Brown. "We teamed up with a group called The Next Test and we've been holding educational seminars at the ground for the public to come to, around climate change in general, particularly the impact on sport. We work closely with Extinction Rebellion on that, we've got local councillors involved, and we've got Professor David Goldblatt coming along as well.

"The areas that are challenging are the bigger build items when you build something new. We redid our roof terrace recently and as much as we could, we got all the timber from reclaimed wood and we had a long debate about what we should line the floor with."

While food sustainability is another big issue for Gloucestershire, it's not always given the same attention further afield. "I think most venues are doing OK at that," says Brown, "but some less so. Do you want to go with a big, multi-faceted national caterer who might be getting their food from anywhere? Or do you go and pursue, like we've done, a local farmer based two miles down the road from us whose foods are all sourced within 30 miles?"

The ECB are due to release a report this year outlining their plan to tackle climate change across the professional game in England. In 2022 they released guidance for grassroots clubs to reduce their carbon footprints and combat rising energy bills. Currently, the ECB offers grants and funding to support counties with building projects and changes which will boost environmental sustainability.

> **“It’s time to get real. You want cricket? You want cricket for the next 30 years? We’re all going to have to think really hard about how we’re going to make this possible**
>
> DR DAVID GOLDBLATT

However, the most significant pressure to drive change within English cricket has come from outside its governance structures. The Next Test was set up as a group of climate-concerned players, clubs and fans to educate those at all levels of the game about how climate change threatens cricket’s existence. The England women’s team agreed in November that individual players should be able to boycott the Player of the Match awards in February’s T20 World Cup, given the award will be sponsored by Aramco, a Saudi Arabian energy company. Some county clubs have gone plastic-free. And in 2021 Sky Sports put out a short documentary on the dangers the climate crisis poses to cricket both at home and abroad.

“You can’t force independent clubs to do it,” says Brown. “But if you have a figurehead like the ECB who makes it a priority and which could probably help fund it and support some stuff around carbon assessments and benchmarking, it would be really, really useful. I’d love to see them sign up to something like the United Nations Sports for Climate Action, or Race to Zero.”

An ECB spokesperson told WCM that there is currently no plan in the ECB’s forthcoming sustainability report to join Race to Zero. Later this year, Warwickshire will join Gloucestershire in taking the Race to Zero pledge, becoming the second professional cricket club to join the initiative. Not all counties have the budget or access to expertise to implement the necessary reforms, however.

“If I ended up ringing Edgbaston and speaking to them, [they will say that] they’ve done this, that and the other, but they’ve got a massive budget that they can implement all these policies with,” says Worcestershire’s Bottomer. “They’ve got the cash flow because of having international games. I could talk to The Oval or Old Trafford or Edgbaston, but my main focus is talking to people like Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Taunton because they’re equivalent to what we are.”

Counties have always and will always have different priorities over what their budgets are spent on. But climate change is a universal problem and no ground or region will be untouched. Without the will and significant funds to invest in updating buildings, renewable energy and fundamentally changing the way their businesses work, life will continue to get harder for those who haven’t or aren’t able to make effective changes.

The cost-of-living crisis has also impacted both those counties who have made sustainable energy choices, and those who have yet to do so. With the price of energy bills soaring, Leicestershire reported an increase of 850 per cent in their payments.

While logically this could encourage more grounds to switch to entirely renewable energy to avoid the unstable cost of oil and potential issues with gas suppliers, green energy also has its problems.

“I don’t know whether they’ve gone up quite as much as the oil and gas industry-fuelled electrics have done, but I do know that renewables have gone up in price too,” says Will Brown. I don’t think [switching to renewable energy] saved us loads. But I do think the crisis we’re in will drive behaviours in a positive way and it will make people realise that the first hurdle of all this is going to be expensive.”

As county belts are tightened and the gap widens between those who host international cricket and Hundred teams and those who don’t, the sustainability gap is also an increasing concern. It is to be hoped that this year’s ECB report will go some way to filling those gaps and centralising change across the counties. Because while counties pushing for change to safeguard cricket’s future is undoubtedly positive, as with most other aspects of society, the steps being implemented feel years overdue.

With little unilateral coordinated action across governing bodies, cricket’s future relies on motivated individuals within its infrastructure who are running out of time to address the dangers posed to the game’s survival by the climate crisis.

BELOW: Alex Ross of Brisbane Heat bats as a bushfire rages behind him at Hobart in 2019

# In other news...

RIGHT: Lord Patel is leaving his role at Headingley

BELOW: The evergreen Tim Murtagh

BELOW-RIGHT: Michael Bracewell is set for his first stint in county cricket

## Yorkshire

Lord Patel will step down as Yorkshire chair at the club's AGM in March after a turbulent tenure at Headingley. Having taken on the role in November 2021 in the wake of the racism crisis which engulfed the club, he has overseen significant change but also faced fierce opposition, most notably for the decision to dismiss 16 members of backroom staff in response to Azeem Rafiq's allegations.

"I would like to thank those members who have been hugely supportive of the changes that the board have introduced at Headingley," said Patel. "I would also like to thank the staff and board members who have all worked tirelessly during what has been a transformational period in Yorkshire's history. There is still much for the club to do, but I have the strongest faith that Yorkshire will be back at the pinnacle of English cricket for the long term."

Meanwhile, former club captain Gary Ballance has been released from his contract at his own request and is continuing his career in Zimbabwe while Neil Wagner, the New Zealand left-arm quick, has signed to play in Yorkshire's first 10 Championship fixtures next season.

## Middlesex

Tim Murtagh has signed a one-year contract extension to remain at the club in a player-coach capacity. The 41-year-old, who has taken 985 wickets for Middlesex since joining the club in 2007, skippered the Seaxes to promotion last season.

"I am delighted to be continuing my playing career for another season after the high of getting promoted last year," said Murtagh. "I am really excited for the opportunity to develop my coaching skills alongside playing this year."

## Kent

The Spitfires have snapped up Aussie fast bowler Kane Richardson for the duration of the T20 Blast. A death-overs specialist who represented his country at last year's T20 World Cup, the 31-year-old turned out for Birmingham Phoenix in The Hundred last summer but this will be his first taste of county cricket.

## Worcestershire

The Pears have signed a brace of Kiwis for the 2023 Blast, with Michael Bracewell, the left-handed batter and off-spinner, and fellow spin-bowling all-rounder Mitchell Santner, who returns for a third spell at New Road, both expected to be available for the majority of the competition.

## Surrey

Alec Stewart has taken a temporary leave of absence from his role as Surrey's director of cricket while his wife Lynn undergoes a course of treatment for cancer.

"All our thoughts are with Alec, Lynn and the family, and we wish them the very best," said Steve Elworthy, the club's chief executive who will assume Stewart's responsibilities. "The club will fully support Alec and the family through this leave of absence and ask everyone to please respect his request for privacy."

## Derbyshire

Wayne Madsen's love affair with Derbyshire is set to continue after the 38-year-old signed a two-year contract extension which will keep him at the club until the end of the 2024 season. Madsen has scored 19,496 runs since arriving at Derby in 2009, with only Kim Barnett scoring more first-class hundreds in the club's history.

# Mailbox

SIR IAN Botham WINES

In association with Botham Wines, the letter of the month receives a bottle of Botham 80 Series Cabernet Sauvignon – an extra special wine presented in a hand-embossed wooden case

An alternative prize will be provided if the winner is aged under 18, or if requested

*We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity*

## ★ LETTER OF THE MONTH

## The counties will be the death of county cricket

First off, I want to say that I grew up on a diet of county cricket. The first thing I did when I got home from school was check Ceefax page 340. The first game of the County Championship is the start of summer, although now it feels more like the tail-end of winter. But the news of the ECB being offered £400m for a slice of The Hundred [through a reported bid from a private equity firm] caused a big conflict with me.

My first thought was how is anyone going to make The Hundred into an £800m business? Yes, you read that right: £800m. Private equity buys things, doubles their money, then cashes it in. Then I thought, what exactly are they buying? The rights to dictate the English summer through the domestic and international calendar – seemingly a further nail in the coffin for county cricket and English cricket as a whole.

But then comes the perversity. Ultimately, it's going to be the counties that vote this through, just like they did with The Hundred in the first place. Why? Because they need another X million lifeline to make it through the next few years.

Which begs the question what are the counties for? What interests do they have other than making it through the next year without going pop? It's all very well saying that if counties are allowed to fail it will be the end of English cricket (as so often read in this publication). But if those counties have a slow death and are allowed to strip all the value out of the English game on their way down, what will that leave at the end?

If the counties want to truly become viable and thrive, they must do something different and quickly, rather than asset-stripping the ECB from the inside, burning though their cash handout, and then going back for more a few years later.

I hope the ECB and the counties understand that this is potentially their ultimatum, that once you do this there is no going back. English cricket would truly be a train on someone else's tracks.

**James Wych**

## Two-Test series leave a hollow feeling

I have a bugbear which I would like to share. What is the point in two-Test series? Can anyone actually ever recall a really good one which did the format justice?

New Zealand's recent visit to Pakistan is just the latest example of a series which appeared to be bubbling nicely when it was brought to an abrupt halt. I wouldn't be at all surprised if England's tour of New Zealand in February, between two fairly evenly matched sides, is similarly a damp squib.

I do understand the financial practicalities of hosting Test matches and the fact that the schedule is reaching (or has already reached?) saturation point. But as we worry about the future of Test cricket, it often feels as though these unsatisfying series actually do more harm than good.

**Lee Davis**

## 'A thing of beauty'

I just bought the January edition of *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, having not purchased a cricket mag for years. Your mag is a thing of beauty!

OK, you had nice timing. The reason I sought you out is because of the T20 World Cup win and the epic first Test victory in Pakistan, but the feature on Sussex is fascinating and the interview with Joe Root is a fabulous celebration of our greatest batsman.

So, respect to you all with an extra little nod to chief designer Joe Provis. I realise these things are a team game, but the magazine is beautifully laid out and designed. It could be used as a case study to train any young editor or designer.

I look forward to February's edition given England's continuing exploits. Nice work team and thanks for an inspiring read.

**Steve Hoare**

LEFT: Zak Crawley walks out to bat for London Spirit

ABOVE: Babar Azam and Tim Southee shake hands ahead of a two-Test series which ended 0-0

BELOW: Under Pat Cummins' captaincy, Australia have won four of five Test series, drawing the other

**CONTACT US AT**
Wisden Cricket Monthly,
The Kia Oval, London,
SE11 5SS
**editorial@wisden.com**
**@WisdenCricket**

## Stokes attracting new fans

It was right and just that Beth Mead was named BBC Sports Personality of the Year given the Lionesses' exploits at the Euros, but I wanted to congratulate Ben Stokes on a thoroughly deserved runners-up finish. It's no mean feat for an athlete who rarely appears on terrestrial TV and fair recognition of what he accomplished last year.

He delivered another World Cup trophy of course, but what he has done with the Test team is nothing short of magnificent and should bring many more fans to the sport. In a wonderful career, perhaps that will be his greatest achievement.

**Philip Levy**

## Ashes set to ignite

I know I've gone early and there is plenty more cricket to come before we reach this point, but I think we could be set for the greatest Ashes series since 2005 when Australia visit this summer. Watching England try to take on Australia's excellent attack will be unmissable. It's just a shame the whole thing will be over by the end of July!

**William Howells**

# STOKING

## How England's sense of adventure lit up Pakistan

In the wake of England's outstanding Test series win in Pakistan, John Stern examines how it was sparked by Ben Stokes' bold and unconventional leadership, and considers where it sits in their all-time list of overseas victories

Richie Benaud lived just long enough to see the start of Ben Stokes' England career but sadly not long enough to witness his shape-shifting Test captaincy. The great man would have approved.

Long before Benaud, who died in 2015, became the voice of summer on two continents, he was an intuitive, bold captain of Australia who helped rouse Test cricket from the late-1950s torpor into which it had sunk. Mike Brearley, who knows a thing or two about imaginative leadership, described him as "the spectators' best friend… alert to inject excitement into the game", while still playing to win.

After England's frenetic run chase at Trent Bridge to seal the series against New Zealand last June, Stokes echoed that philosophy when he said his players should "try and think that we're in the entertainment business rather than the sporting business".

"The captain who sees an opening and goes straight for the jugular," wrote Benaud in *On Reflection*, "is the one who is drinking the champagne at the end of the day," not the one who "muses about it for an over or two".

Interestingly, the best captain Benaud said he ever played under was his New South Wales teammate, the effervescent all-rounder Keith Miller, who never led Australia. "The hallmark of Miller's captaincy," said Benaud, "was that he never did anything ordinary, or rather he never allowed anyone to believe it was ordinary." Sound familiar? Benaud also believed that Miller was peerless in assessing a batter's weakness, in part because, as a bowler, he was already doing it.

Benaud led Australia in the Tied Test against Frank Worrell's West Indies at Brisbane in 1960, an event that won over hearts and minds like few matches before or since. It was, according to EM Wellings in *Wisden*, "more than a tied match. It was tied by teams playing in Homeric manner". The following summer, though, was the crowning glory of Benaud's 28 Tests in charge – an Australian series victory in England for the first time in 13 years. Australia scored their runs and bowled their overs

JOHN STERN

*Wisden Cricket Monthly* editor-at-large

@SternWords

# THE FIRE

WOOD
33
STOKES
55
cinch
IG

PHOTO BY ASIF HASSAN

ABOVE: Rehan Ahmed excelled under Stokes' empathetic leadership on Test debut

at a substantially quicker rate than their hosts. *Wisden* described Australia as "adopting an almost carefree policy throughout their five months' stay". Winners *and* grinners. "Benaud did an unsurpassed job for his team and the game," wrote Jack Fingleton.

As we reflect on England's remarkable, at times outlandish, return to Pakistan, there are parallels of Benaud's sparky success. "It's not just the winning here which is difficult but the style," said Jimmy Anderson after the series. "It's not quite sunk in yet. Once it has it will be right up there in everyone's careers."

There have been so many remarkable aspects to Stokes' brief captaincy tenure. More to the point, there has been little that has been unremarkable. "Under Ben Stokes the extraordinary happens almost every day," reported the BBC's Joe Wilson in Pakistan. The combination of unstinting strategic bravery, tactical brilliance and emotional intelligence has been gloriously bewildering to witness. In the *Art of Captaincy*, Brearley says the best captains "are tough *and* considerate; they can run a strict ship *and* allow leeway".

Mark Wood has seen the personal development of Durham teammate Stokes at close quarters. "He's always had a fantastic cricket brain. The way he conducts himself and the messages he gives, he's just so much more rounded than when we were growing up. He was this alpha guy who would whack it, never back down. He's still got all that, but he's got other sides to him now. He'll put an arm round people, express what he means really articulately – I didn't think he had some of the words in his locker. He's been world-class."

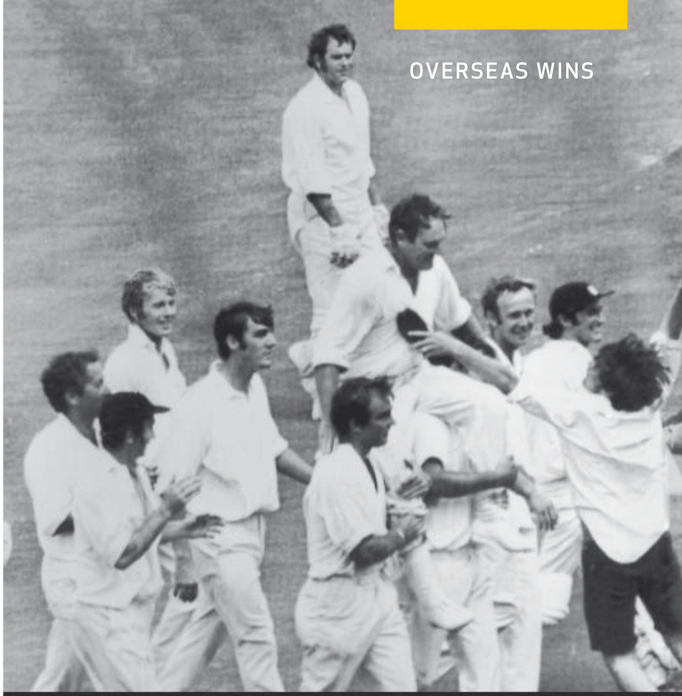
Victories overseas are precious gems for players and captains. Wins on home soil might have more mainstream cut-through and leave indelible memories for those lucky enough to attend games or watch on TV in their own time zone, but it's those triumphs against the odds, often in alien conditions, perhaps in front of a hostile crowd, that leave an indelible mark of quality.

England have played 129 series (of two or more matches) away from home and won 46. Of those, a dozen or so particularly stand out, including, of course, Pakistan in 2022. The first Test at Rawalpindi ranks, according to *The Telegraph*'s Scyld Berry – who has seen more Test cricket than almost anyone alive – as England's second-best victory, behind the win at Mumbai in 2012.

But what of the series as a whole? Is it England's best ever away win? Pakistan had never been whitewashed at home, England had only ever won two Tests there before. It's a tempting thesis, but there's plenty of stiff competition.

In the afterglow of the 3-0 win, it's worth remembering that England struggled to get a team on the field for that first Test in Rawalpindi after illness ripped through their camp. England's batters going full tilt from the first ball is now commonplace, but to score 657 at faster than a run a ball, as they did in the first innings at Rawalpindi (with 506 of those coming on day one), defies cricketing gravity.

Stokes' captaincy has managed to combine an all-or-nothing clarity with nuance and sophistication. Fear



of failure has been banished. The bond he formed with Jack Leach in that career-defining last-wicket stand at Headingley in 2019 has served him well as he coaxes the Somerset spinner towards fulfilling his talent. Leach's instincts to maintain control and have protective field settings have been challenged, in a firm but friendly way. Now Leach is taking the new ball when circumstances suit.

Being 2-0 up paved the way for the selection of 18-year-old Rehan Ahmed in the final Test at Karachi, but it's hard to imagine any previous regime daring to pick him, even in that situation. A teenage leggie is a fragile object at the best of times, but Stokes handled him sympathetically after a tough first spell. A maiden five-for was the reward, Ahmed becoming the youngest debutant in men's Test history to achieve the milestone.

Just as England's tactics shocked their opponents last summer, with the first-rate seam attacks of New Zealand and India pureed with relish, Pakistan found themselves questioning their whole approach. It's the sort of introspection that we used to see from England after yet another Ashes shellacking.

Might the series have turned out differently if the quicks Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf had been fit? Or if Naseem Shah had played more than a bit part? England might counter that they too had notable absentees in Jonny Bairstow and Jofra Archer, but the strength of the opposition is one of three significant factors which need to be taken into consideration when assessing just how good this win was.

The others are the length of series and the attitude of the crowds. It's hard to give quite the same credence to a three-match rubber compared to gruelling four- or five-Test series in Australia or India. And as Stokes and his players repeatedly made clear, they were greeted with the warmest of welcomes by Pakistan. Contrast this with the hostility – at least from the media and fans – in Australia and the partisan intensity of India. England faced plenty of challenges in Pakistan but silencing the crowd was not one of them.

Nonetheless, it's reasonable to argue that the recent triumph was the best-led overseas Test tour – tactically and pastorally – in England's history, and there's no doubt that it brought some pre-Christmas cheer. Joy to the World? Well, maybe not entirely – they were probably a bit nonplussed in Brisbane and Bangalore, but from Barrow to Brighton, we loved every funky field, every Big Ben grin, every outrageous reverse sweep, every uproarious run-rate shift. It may not have been England's best overseas series win, but it was certainly the most entertaining. As Richie would have said, absolutely marvellous. ▷

RIGHT: Ray Illingworth captained England to victory in Australia in 1970/71, their first overseas Ashes win since 1954/55

BELOW: Ben Duckett made four 50-plus scores from six knocks in Pakistan and scored at a strike rate of 96

# Choppy waters

## England's series record away from home, decade by decade

Since 1877, when James Lillywhite's XI contested what would become the first official Test match in Melbourne, England have played 129 series of two or more Tests and won 46. The table below shows that away form is a decent barometer of the England team's standing – post war, the high watermarks are in the 1950s, when England were the best side in the world, and the 1960s, a decade that includes the momentous Ashes win of 1970/71.

Only four overseas series wins out of 23 from 1981 to 2000 is indicative of a dark stretch for English cricket that was illuminated by the arrival of Duncan Fletcher as coach, and an overseas win percentage of almost 40 that followed under his leadership.

| | Series wins | Total series* | Win % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1877-1900 | 7 | 11 | 63.6 |
| 1901-10 | 1 | 5 | 20.0 |
| 1911-20 | 2 | 3 | 66.7 |
| 1921-30 | 3 | 7 | 42.8 |
| 1931-38 | 2 | 6 | 33.3 |
| 1946-50 | 1 | 4 | 25.0 |
| 1951-60 | 4 | 9 | 44.4 |
| 1961-70 | 5 | 11 | 45.4 |
| 1971-80 | 4 | 11 | 36.4 |
| 1981-90 | 2 | 12 | 16.7 |
| 1991-2000 | 2 | 11 | 18.2 |
| 2001-10 | 7 | 18 | 38.9 |
| 2011-20 | 4 | 16 | 25.0 |
| 2020-22 | 2 | 5 | 40.0 |

*Of two or more matches

# ROADS WELL-TRAVELLED

## THE BEST OF ENGLAND'S TEST TOURS

BELOW: Graham Thorpe and Nasser Hussain steer England home in the dark at Karachi

RIGHT: Kevin Pietersen played one of the great Test knocks to overcome India at Mumbai

### THRILLERS AND NAIL-BITERS

Yorkshire's Jack Brown was anticipating Bazball more than a century before its birth. **England's 1894/95 series in Australia** was "the first great Ashes series," according to David Frith. "Even Queen Victoria took an interest in the scores as they came through via the new cable service," he wrote in WCM. The series was tied 2-2 after four Tests with England, led by the popular Andrew Stoddart, chasing down 297 to win the decider in Melbourne thanks to Brown's 140, the first fifty of which came in 28 minutes – still an Ashes record. Brown died a decade later, aged 35.

**Karachi in the dark, 2000/01**, was inevitably much discussed during the recent series, but equally impressive was the post-Christmas win in **Sri Lanka** where England came back from 1-0 to defeat Murali and the tropical heat. The three-wicket, series-levelling win in Kandy was, according to *Wisden*, "a bruising, bar-room brawl of a Test, the type that, pre-Fletcher, England would not have won".

In **South Africa in 2004/05**, "England, under the calm yet increasingly bold captaincy of Michael Vaughan, won an often-thrilling Test series 2-1 and secured their first victory in South Africa for 40 years," wrote John Etheridge in *Wisden*. Andrew Strauss scored three hundreds and Matthew Hoggard clinched the series with one of the great swing-bowling displays, taking 12-205 in the fourth Test at Johannesburg.

### COMEBACKS

Humiliated in Brisbane, Len Hutton harnessed the ferocity of Frank 'Typhoon' Tyson to orchestrate a 3-1 turnaround in **Australia in 1954/55**. "The most remarkable Test series in living memory," said *The Observer*'s Alan Ross in his delightful book of the tour. Given the quality of opposition, this series – England's first win in Australia since Bodyline, 22 years earlier – can make a claim to be their finest overseas success. "Tactically, Hutton seemed occasionally cautious, sometimes surprised one, but was thoroughly effective," wrote Ross. "If the genius of captaincy lies in the precise husbanding of resources, then Hutton on this tour frequently demonstrated it. He deserved all the praise in the world for England's success."

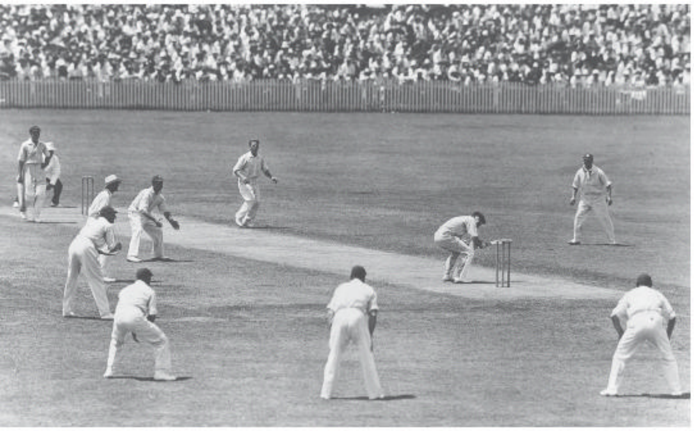
A more contemporary candidate for the GOAT is the 2-1 victory in **India, 2012/13**, captained by Alastair Cook. "England left India celebrating a victory for the history books," wrote George Dobell in *Wisden*, also calling it "one of their least expected wins". Hammered by nine wickets in the first Test, England recalled Monty Panesar who, in tandem with Graeme Swann, beat India at their own game on turning tracks. At Mumbai, Kevin Pietersen, just months after being dropped for sending texts to the South Africa team, scored 186, his 22nd, penultimate and perhaps finest Test century.

That was England's first win in India since **David Gower's side triumphed in 1984/85**. Missing Graham Gooch (rebel tour ban) and Ian Botham (panto), Gower's tour was beset by off-field troubles, including political assassinations. They lost the first Test but with double tons from Graeme Fowler and Mike Gatting, and lion-hearted bowling from Neil Foster, the tourists turned the series around and won 2-1. There were horses-for-courses picks (Tim Robinson over Chris Broad) and bold, unpopular calls (such as the selection of Phil Edmonds) by Gower. "I've always believed," the captain wrote, "that a team that is allowed to develop its own character will respond to the responsibility of playing important cricket. [Graeme] Fowler told me later how much he had enjoyed that tour, and one of the reasons he gave was that he has been allowed to feel as though he is a responsible human being."

## WELL-EXECUTED PLANS

**Australia 1932/33**. Bodyline, Jardine, Larwood. Bradman becalmed. The tour that almost broke an empire was, like it or not, a 4-1 triumph for England. "It broke new ground for being a 'system' that demanded an unprecedented unity of purpose from the England team," wrote Simon Wilde in *England: The Biography*. *Wisden* said that Bodyline caused people at home – many of them famous figures in the game – to wonder if the winning of the rubber was "worth this strife".

No England supporter was asking that question after the **Ashes of 2010/11**, England's first series victory in Australia since Mike Gatting's team won in 1986/87. The preparation was obsessively rigorous. From the pre-tour Black Forest boot camp to the intensely competitive warm-up matches and the canny, even unconventional, bowling selections, this was peak 'Andocracy', as Scyld Berry described the combination of captain Strauss and coach Flower. "Ray Illingworth may have been a smarter tactician, Len Hutton a finer batsman and Douglas Jardine a more ruthless autocrat, but the sum of this captain's parts was greater than the whole, and it was right that Strauss now joined such rarefied company," wrote Mark Nicholas.



LEFT: Australia's Bill Woodfull avoids a bouncer in the infamous Bodyline series

Ray Illingworth's finest hour came in **Australia in 1970/71**, a series that is among England's most impressive on the road and also one that defies easy categorisation. "No captain of a touring team since DR Jardine nearly 40 years ago has had such a difficult task as Raymond Illingworth," wrote EM Wellings in *Wisden*.

Illy's captaincy was criticised before the tour by, among others, Don Bradman. The series itself featured unruly crowds, questionable umpiring that meant England's bowlers didn't receive a single lbw decision in their favour throughout, and an internal dispute with team management about the scheduling of an extra Test following a wash-out in Melbourne. "Ray Ilingworth's leadership had my full support," wrote John Snow in *Cricket Rebel*. "Ray flew to Australia determined… to return home a winner. He achieved his objective with a single-mindedness that had to be admired."

## DOMINANCE

Winning overseas is one thing, winning comfortably is another entirely, and English scepticism tends to question series results that are too one-sided in their team's favour. Mike Brearley's 5-1 **Ashes win in 1978/79** is understandably ignored because of Australia's Packer-induced weakness.

England's Ashes victory in **1986/87** was superficially close (2-1) but the scoreline belied the tourists' dominance. History tells us Australia were a poor side, bottoming out before their Allan Border-inspired resurgence. But at the time it was a terrific win, coming after an awful year of heavy defeats and captaincy changes. England arrived in Australia "carrying the prayers rather than the aspirations of their countrymen, following three lost series in succession", according to John Thicknesse in *Wisden*. "One of the most pleasing aspects was the unity within the team and the way they dovetailed on the field… Gatting batted as he captained, without frills. His team knew where they stood with him."

Similarly, the **3-0 win in the Caribbean in 2004** looks, with hindsight, inevitable, but it was historically significant and exhilaratingly intense. The sight of Hurricane Harmison tearing in at Sabina Park and Queen's Park Oval is one to rank alongside any fast-bowling display in England's history.

It's easy to forget that England have won their last five Tests in Sri Lanka and the **3-0 victory in 2018/19**, under Joe Root, was only their third overseas whitewash in a series of three or more Tests. It was, said Root, "a victory we can all be very proud of for the rest of our careers". Root and his teammates will undoubtedly feel the same about the recent success in Pakistan.

BELOW: Joe Root oversaw a 3-0 win in Sri Lanka in 2018/19

# 2022

# WISDEN MEN'S TEST

THE TEAM WAS SELECTED BASED ON PERFORMANCES
FROM JANUARY 1-DECEMBER 31, 2022

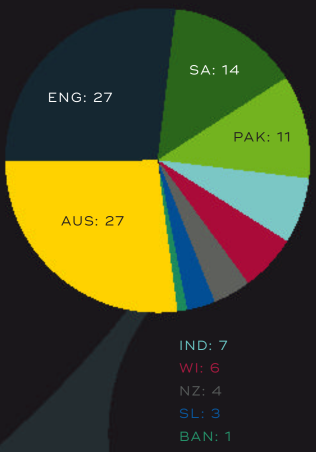
After a year in which Ben Stokes' England began their mission to redraw the parameters of Test cricket, our team of 2022 has a different feel to it. There are only three survivors from our 2021 selection, with more than half the votes from our 31-strong voting panel of writers and broadcasters going to cricketers from England or Australia.

Indian players dominated in 2021, accounting for almost a third of the total votes, but with one honourable exception, they were almost entirely ignored this time around. It's a remarkable statistic that no specialist batter from India received a single vote from our panel, reflecting an uneven year for the game's financial superpower in which they lost a series in South Africa and were Bairstowed in Birmingham.

Three England players make our side following the team's astonishing transformation – with their maverick coach also making an appearance in these pages – but they couldn't match Australia's tally of four. It's tantalising to think that seven of the best 11 players from the year just gone will be locking horns this summer – and that's with two of the greatest batters the game has seen not making the cut for our side.

Concerns for the future of Test cricket are well-documented and justified but – on the field at least – the format appears in rude health. South Africa, West Indies and Sri Lanka all upset members of the 'big three' in 2022, while Bangladesh's stunning win against WTC champions New Zealand at Mount Maunganui back in January showed that anything is possible. It's telling that in the year of a T20 World Cup, it's still Test cricket that provides the memories which will live longest.

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL VOTES



**THE SELECTION PANEL:**
LAWRENCE BOOTH, ADAM COLLINS, MEL FARRELL, BEN GARDNER, JO HARMAN, TAHA HASHIM, JON HOTTEN, MOHAMMAD ISAM, GEOFF LEMON, JONATHAN LIEW, DAVID LLOYD, WILL MACPHERSON, AMER MALIK, ANDREW MILLER, ABHISHEK MUKHERJEE, PATRICK NOONE, DANIEL NORCROSS, SCOTT OLIVER, CAMERON PONSONBY, YAS RANA, MARK RAMPRAKASH, AADYA SHARMA, ROB SMYTH, JOHN STERN, MACHEL ST PATRICK HEWITT, PHIL WALKER, JAMES WALLACE, ISABELLE WESTBURY, FELIX WHITE, TIM WIGMORE, KATYA WITNEY, ANDY ZALTZMAN

## 1. USMAN KHAWAJA

**AUSTRALIA**

**11 Tests, 1,080 runs at 67.50, 4 hundreds, 5 fifties**

**94% of our panel voted for him**

"Khawaja's a good player against mediocre bowling," opined Ian Chappell ahead of the last Ashes. "But against good bowling, I don't think there's much future there." The 35-year-old fired back a cheeky reply ("Chappelli's not even the best player in his family, so if I'm going to take advice, I might take it from his younger brother") but his performances on the field provided an even more emphatic response. After nearly three years out of the side, Khawaja made an emotional return for the Sydney Test in January last year – batting at №5 in place of the Covid-afflicted Travis Head – becoming only the ninth player to score centuries in each innings of an Ashes Test. Elevated to open thereafter, he continued his superlative form in Pakistan where he was named Player of the Series in a historic win. Selected by all but two members of our panel.

**66.50**

**Khawaja's Test batting average as an opener, the highest of any opener in history (minimum 1,000 runs)**

**THE STANDOUT**
**104* (178 balls, 8 fours)**
**Pakistan v Australia | Third Test, Lahore, March 2022**
The Islamabad-born left-hander had spoken passionately about the significance of Australia's first tour of Pakistan for 24 years and he was in inspired form throughout. After scores of 97, 160 and 44* in draws at Rawalpindi and Karachi, Khawaja made a gritty 91 in the first innings at Lahore before stroking an unbeaten century in the second dig to leave the Aussie attack enough time to bowl out their hosts and take the series.

**WHAT NEXT?** Khawaja has a challenging year in store. First up, there's a four-match series in India, where he has curiously never played a Test match and will have his technique against spin tested far more rigorously than it was on the deathly slow tracks of Pakistan. Then it's to England, where he has previously been exposed against the moving ball, making one half-century from 12 knocks and averaging 19.66.

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "I think he has been one of our best six batsmen from the moment he started playing for Australia." ***Ricky Ponting***

## 2. KRAIGG BRATHWAITE

**WEST INDIES**

**7 Tests, 687 runs at 62.45, 2 hundreds, 5 fifties; 4 wickets at 61.50**

**65% of our panel voted for him**

Of the 50 highest run-scorers of 2022, Kraigg Brathwaite's strike rate of 40 is the second lowest. At any other point in history, this would barely warrant a mention. But it is Brathwaite's fate to be an old-fashioned player in a new-fangled era – one in which the Test game, especially in the Caribbean, is fighting for its life. A man of few words, a low backlift and limitless depths of concentration, Brathwaite would once have been a useful top-order buffer to the glamour boys. Now, he is a whole batting unit rolled into one, and tellingly the only West Indian in that top 50. His sweetest moment of 2022 came against a pre-Stokes England, when he blunted them for days at Barbados (160 & 56*) and then hit the winning runs at Grenada to clinch an unlikely series win.

**THE STANDOUT**

**110 (188 balls, 13 fours)**

**Australia v West Indies | First Test, Perth, December 2022**

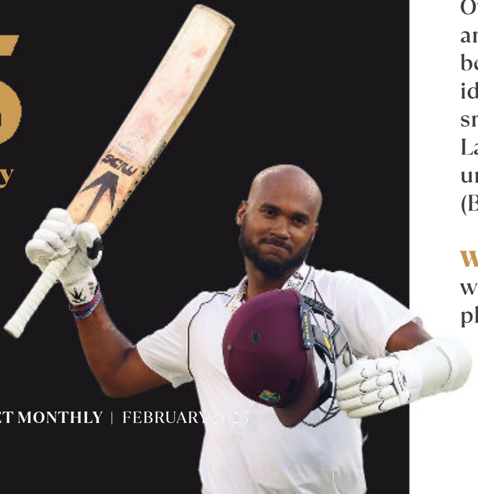
A second-innings ton that clinched his place in our team (above Pakistan's Abdullah Shafique, who claimed 35% of the vote) was Brathwaite's Test career in microcosm: a defiant and technically astute rearguard undercut by the inadequacies of those around him.

**WHAT NEXT?** Hard to say. West Indies are scheduled to play just six Test matches in 2023, with four games in Africa – two each in Zimbabwe and South Africa – and two at home against India. If Brathwaite plays them all, he will have managed 13 games in two years. This is the reality facing the Test game in the unpopulated margins.

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "The burden of trying to live up to Clive Lloyd's team, or the Viv Richards era... that is not Kraigg. You have to give him space." ***Ian Bishop***

**673**

**Brathwaite's tally of minutes for once dismissed against England in the epic draw at Bridgetown**



## 3. MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE

**AUSTRALIA**

**11 Tests, 957 runs at 56.29, 4 hundreds, 1 fifty; 1 wicket at 178**

**61% of our panel voted for him**

Labuschagne is the only batter to keep his place from last year's XI, and it's not hard to see why. Against the Windies in December, he passed 3,000 runs in just his 51st innings, the quickest to the milestone since Bradman. His devotion to the game is legendary, his obsessions insatiable. "Man," he once told WCM, "I'm *consumed* by cricket." In a world swaying to the white ball, he is the full red-ball package: easy on the eye, a genius leaver and assessor of length, brave against the quicks, a crisp driver and a lethal leg-side bully.

**THE STANDOUT**

**163 (305 balls, 14 fours)**

**Australia v West Indies | Second Test, Adelaide, December 2022**

Another routine century, following his 204 and 104* the week before. Donnish.

**WHAT NEXT?** A World Test Championship final at The Oval, sandwiched by two monster series: one in India, and then a return bout against England, where it all began in 2019. A dip in form is almost a given – even his idol and fellow obsessive, Steve Smith, experienced a smallish drop-off after the years of plenty – but should Labuschagne come through those series with reputation undimmed, then he can begin his ascent to the biggest (Bradman-less) records there are.

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "I would have never guessed that he would have been able to do what he has done. It's just a phenomenal hunger for runs." ***Mike Hussey***

# INNINGS OF THE YEAR

## DINESH CHANDIMAL

**SRI LANKA**

**206* (326 balls, 545 minutes, 16 fours, 5 sixes)**
**Sri Lanka v Australia | Second Test, Galle | July 2022**

**WORDS** PHIL WALKER

In early July, with the country at boiling point, Sri Lanka's cricketers folded in less than 23 overs at Galle to hand Australia a huge win in the first Test. Never before had they lost a home match in fewer deliveries. The ground was barren at the end, its iconic fort hauntingly unpopulated. It would transpire that any spectators had been dispersed, lest the state-controlled TV cameras accidentally captured any inconvenient placards or banners.

The second Test, also at Galle, would go ahead against a backdrop of deepening anti-government fervour. While Australia built slowly on day one, two hours up the road at Colombo, waves of protestors marched on the presidential palace, inside which could be found the last vestiges of a brutish and discredited regime. The numbers swelled across the day, with many hundreds of Galle locals heading for the railway station to get to Colombo to join them.

As the game rolled on eerily into day two, the ground was by now a short-stay garrison from where further crowds could push on to the station. At some point on the second morning, Australia were all out for 364. At another, the fort was repopulated by the people, not that you'd know it from the carefully choreographed TV pictures and muffled microphones. The players knew, though. They could feel what was happening.

Dinesh Chandimal is an enigma of a cricketer, a classical right-hander of irregular greatness whom one has learned not to rely on. In full flow, however, and especially at Galle, his favourite ground, he is a masterly manipulator of the turning ball. Sri Lanka's riposte began strongly, with top-order runs from the captain Dimuth Karunaratne – who had earlier been an active presence among the protestors in the streets – before Chandimal took over.

If his first ton was relatively reserved, the second was a riot of liberation, moving from 100 to 206* in 131 balls and culminating with three sixes in six deliveries from Mitchell Starc, all of them sailing over mid-wicket towards the fort, shots that would take him past Sangakkara – who himself was tweeting his support for the uprising midway through the game – for the highest score by a Sri Lankan against Australia. Chandimal shared a 49-run partnership with №11 Kasun Rajitha, to which Rajitha contributed no runs at all.

For Chandimal the innings captured him at his stately, imperious best – the sweet spot across a calendar year in which he was the only player in Test cricket's top 50 run-scorers to average more than 100. Sri Lanka would take the game by an innings, their victory celebrated by hordes of defiant locals. The match, for cricket always finds a way, was another marker that this Sri Lanka team has talent and potential, and no little heart.

MAS
Dialog
SS
SPEED

PHOTO BY BUDDHIKA WEERASINGHE

PHOTO BY ASIF HASSAN

# 4. BABAR AZAM

**Pakistan**

**9 matches, 1,184 runs at 69.64, 4 hundreds, 7 fifties**

**74 % of our panel voted for him**

**THE STANDOUT**

**196 (425 balls, 21 fours, 1 six)**
**Pakistan v Australia | Second Test, Karachi, March 2022**

An astonishing, sustained bout of technical perfection against Cummins and co. saw Babar orchestrate a slow-burn match-saver across the last five sessions of the Karachi Test that was so complete that at one stage on the final afternoon Pakistan threatened to haul in the nominal target of 506. The seventh-highest fourth-innings score in Test history, a 603-minute epic that was never not compelling to watch.

**WHAT NEXT?** His Test captaincy – flat, timid, confused – threatens to undermine his celestial powers with the bat. Will he carry on in the job? He says he has no intention of turning it in, but Pakistan's home form in 2022 was little short of miserable – in eight Tests against Australia, England and New Zealand, they failed to win a single match.

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "The 21st century belongs to Babar Azam." ***Wasim Akram***

**Taha Hashim** travelled to Pakistan to unpick the enigma that is Babar Azam

The cameras have tricked me. Having watched much of the morning session from my grandparents' place, just down the road from the National Stadium in Karachi, I was expecting a soulless and near empty ground after lunch on day two of the second Test between Pakistan and New Zealand. It's a Tuesday afternoon in the nocturnal city, and the hosts have played some poor cricket of late. This Test shouldn't even be happening here, with weather concerns in Multan having forced a last-minute rejig of plans. While entry is free, there shouldn't be much life in this party.

But while I was right in expecting a meagre turnout – we're talking hundreds, not thousands – there's still a relatively raucous energy here, one that makes the Lord's hum feel like a creaking printer in a library. Pakistan have begun their first innings, and any shot off the middle gets those around me in the stands going. The rallying cry of *Pakistan Zindabad!* does the rounds, but the crowds in this country aren't strict on partisanship; New Zealand fielders on the boundary are shown plenty of love, too, and respond with waves in appreciation. There is a soul to this occasion, and you can feel its presence ahead of Babar Azam's arrival at the crease.

This is the man around which Pakistani cricket revolves. As Abdullah Shafique and Imam-ul-Haq begin well, a couple of twenty-something men sat in front of me share concerned looks as they wonder out loud if they'll see Babar bat today. When Shan Masood is out not long after, he doesn't even get the chance to step over the boundary before the repeated shouts of BABAR! begin. The decibels aren't close to the levels they were last March at this same ground, when Babar reeled off 196 to save the Test against Australia. But it's still some sound.

The early signs for Pakistan's captain are promising, his nimble footwork letting him toy with New Zealand's spinners. But then, a mix-up with Imam, quizzical looks, anguished screams, and the easiest of run-outs. It brings a momentary hush. It's a slapstick beginning to Babar's 2023 after a very peculiar 2022.

First, to the good stuff, of which there was plenty. Babar had long established himself as a white-ball phenom who'd had his fair share of moments in Test cricket, but this was a calendar year of domination against the red. Nine Tests brought more runs than anyone else in the world and four centuries to move his tally to nine. Helpful surfaces at home played a part but there were still two *this-guy-is-something-else* knocks in there: the masterpiece against Australia and a century

> **As a captain in Pakistan, it's a constant struggle because you're either king or you're a peasant. There's never anything in-between**
>
> Mickey Arthur

on a Galle turner when his teammates could barely lay a bat on it. ODIs brought 697 runs at 84.87, and you can chuck a T20 ton against England in there too. He scored 2,598 international runs last year. Bangladesh's Litton Das, in second place, amassed 1,921.

There were a couple of slumps in there too. Despite his worthy crack at three-format excellence – a task that grows more and more difficult by the day for even the best out there – Babar's form collapsed during the Asia Cup, and those never-ending questions over his T20 strike rate simmered ahead of the World Cup. He made just 14 runs in his first four innings of that tournament, his only score of note a half-century in the semi-final win over New Zealand. When it came to contesting two white-ball finals, he failed to sparkle: a single-figure score against Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup was followed by a sedate 28-ball 32 against England at the MCG. On both occasions, Pakistan lost.

Leading the Test side was an obvious struggle, too, with his team failing to win a single Test on their own turf. The fixture list had looked a good one for Pakistan, one that very realistically pointed to a spot in the World Test Championship final, but series defeats to Australia and England – which encompassed a run of four consecutive defeats at home – ruined such a prospect.

In both series, Babar was comprehensively out-captained by two men of contrasting styles. Pat Cummins stayed patient and was particularly adept at sensing when he and Mitchell Starc needed to come into play with the reversing ball, with his men securing the series in its final session. Ben Stokes chose adventure and won it on the opening morning. Babar's side, on the other hand, spent their home Tests searching for a new identity. Bowlers came in and out over the year. Some suffered with injury; all were presumably haunted by the lack of assistance from some truly dire pitches. Ultimately, Babar looked lost without Shaheen Shah Afridi, his most prized possession, who spent a decent chunk of time on the sidelines. The batters fared better, with Shafique, Imam and Saud Shakeel emerging as players of promise, but a collapse was always just around the corner.

Overall, Babar's approach is safety-first – the fields don't stand out, final-day finishes with the bat seem more focused on securing a draw before going for the win, and the opposing side dictate the tempo. His uncharacteristic declaration in Pakistan's first Test against New Zealand, which gave his side 15 overs to bowl out the opposition, was hard to pin down: a genuine tilt at Stokesian-style bravado or done with the knowledge that the fading Karachi light would halt any prospect of a Kiwi victory?

To get an accurate read of the man is difficult. On the field, he doesn't have the strict poker face of Eoin Morgan, nor is he in your face like Virat Kohli. There are moments where those wide eyes give way to a frustration over something gone wrong in the field, the world suddenly at odds with him. He can work in clichés when dealing with the media, but when a few prods and barbs come his way he does have an edge to his replies, something that's been on show of late when he's defended his captaincy. "He's just a normal guy, very quiet, never the loud guy around the group," Mickey Arthur, his former head coach, told me earlier this year. "He's always in the background doing his own thing, just a general happy-go-lucky guy."

How he navigates the latest dose of chaos in Pakistani cricket is another mystery. There was plenty of turbulence in the corridors of power in December, with Ramiz Raja ousted as chairman and Najam Sethi moving in as the man in charge. That change brought Shahid Afridi – that loud, larger-than-life wildcard of a cricketer – back into the mix as interim chief selector. How does the more reserved Babar fit into this unpredictable environment? The drama reminds me of something else Arthur said. "As a captain in Pakistan, it's a constant struggle because you're either king or you're a peasant. There's never anything in-between."

At 28, Babar may well be the best batter in the world *and* at the start of a golden run. Somehow he doesn't look completely shattered after more than two years as an all-format captain, a job that seems unrealistic in the modern landscape, and the runs aren't stopping. Maybe he is still the man to pin everything on: Pakistan will surely find their method at home after years of exile in the UAE, and his white-ball reign has had its moments, too. Or perhaps the volatility of Pakistani cricket presents another route. For now, Babar Azam occupies the centre with his mask on, keeping us in the dark over what this unreadable genius is really thinking.

# SPELL OF THE YEAR

## EBADOT HOSSAIN

### BANGLADESH

### 6-46 (21 overs) | New Zealand v Bangladesh
### First Test, Mount Maunganui | January 2021

**WORDS** PHIL WALKER

Bangladesh's knackered cricketers dragged themselves to New Zealand last January. Mentally shot after months on the road, bubbled up to their eyeballs, it was a fraught time for world cricket's flying circus and for Bangladesh in particular.

Within moments of their arrival, eight of the squad were forced into quarantine when a passenger on their plane was found to have Covid, and the rest followed when Rangana Herath, the team's spin-bowling coach, returned his own positive test. Ten days of quarantine left the squad with two days to prepare against the world Test champions. No one gave them a chance.

Much of day one went to form, with Devon Conway easing to another score, but a lower-order collapse saw New Zealand stutter to 328, the slide precipitated by a spirited spell late in the day from Ebadot Hossain, the former volleyball player and active serviceman with the Bangladesh Air Force who came into the match with the worst average of any bowler who's played 10 Tests.

In reply, the visitors grafted deep. Their top eight all made double figures. Four of them made scores between 64 and 86, as New Zealand toiled in benign conditions for 176.2 overs. In 22 years as a Test nation, Bangladesh had never beaten New Zealand; excluding matches against the Windies and Zimbabwe, they had won just three Tests anywhere, and none away from home. So despite a lead of 130, hopes were tempered going into the final five sessions; a flat pitch and a peashooter attack with next to no miles in their legs does that to a team.

Late in the evening session on day four, New Zealand are five runs ahead and two wickets down when Ebadot, in the midst of a long spell, begins his 13th over. After a single and a dot, he finds the breakthrough, arcing an inswinger into Will Young. The left-hander Henry Nicholls, next in, is immediately struck on the crease. Just missing. The next cuts in late on the angle from around the wicket to clean him up. The keeper-bat Tom Blundell smothers his first ball to see off the over, from which Ebadot had claimed two wickets, making it three for the innings.

For the first act of Ebadot's next, Blundell loses the path of a 140kph banana ball that screams past his off stump. The next, bang on target, is just dug out, but he's helpless to locate the following delivery, which crashes into the knee roll right in front of leg stump.

New Zealand, shell-shocked, are five down at the close, and though Ross Taylor is unbeaten, Ebadot will not be denied. The next morning he produces an echo of the delivery to Blundell, arcing in late against the right-hander to pin back his leg pole, making him the first Bangladeshi seamer to take a five-wicket haul anywhere since 2013. By lunchtime, they have their greatest ever win.

Ebadot Hossain knew its significance. "Our brothers in our teams!" he said. "They don't get any wins! We came, we had to set a goal, yes. We all raise our hands, we can do it in the New Zealand soil! We can beat the New Zealand soil!"

The win stands alone, in isolation. They have not got close to it since. But still, it's there; cherished evidence that even in a game as uncompromising as this, riven by the inequities of wealth and resource, nothing is impossible with the wind at your back.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL BRADLEY

## 5. JONNY BAIRSTOW

**ENGLAND**

**10 Tests, 1,061 runs at 66.31, 6 hundreds, 1 fifty**

**100% of our panel voted for him**

A unanimous pick, Jonny Bairstow began 2022 without a century in his last 37 Test innings; he then hit six in his next 16 (doubling his career tally), notching hundreds at Sydney and Antigua before jumping aboard the Stokes/McCullum bandwagon and leaving a trail of destruction in his wake. Having averaged 24.43 across nine Tests in 2021, when his red-ball career appeared in terminal decline, Bairstow emerged as the format's outstanding batter last year, scoring more centuries than any other player.

**THE STANDOUT**

**136 (92 balls, 14 fours, 7 sixes)**

**England v New Zealand | Second Test, Trent Bridge, June 2022**

Take your pick, really. But this blitzkrieg at the Bridge set the ball rolling for New England. After three low scores to open the series left his place in some doubt, Bairstow exploded into life on day five as the hosts chased down 299 in 50 overs, running riot after tea to fall just short of Gilbert Jessop's record for the fastest Test century by an English batter and pulling off an extraordinary, transformational win in the process.

**WHAT NEXT?** The broken leg sustained on a golf course last October means he will have to sit out February's tour of New Zealand. When he does return, the superlative form of Harry Brook will reignite the perennial question: should Jonny take the keeping gloves?

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "When he gets those 'Jonny eyes', you just let him do what he needs to do." ***Ben Stokes***

6

**Bairstow's six Test centuries in a calendar year equalled the English record, shared by Compton, Vaughan and Root**

## 6. BEN STOKES

**ENGLAND**

**15 Tests, 870 runs at 36.25, 2 hundreds, 4 fifties; 26 wickets at 31.19**

**84% of our panel voted for him**

Stokes is now so omnipotent in English cricket that he doesn't need to post big numbers (his 2022 stats are uncannily similar to his career digits) or play any T20 warm-ups before a world tournament to be assured of his place right in the vanguard of all that is positive about the game in this country. No longer merely a superstar, he's the most important England captain since Hussain.

**THE STANDOUT**

**103 (163 balls, 6 fours, 3 sixes)**

**England v South Africa | Second Test, Old Trafford, August 2022**

After a heavy defeat at Lord's, Stokes turns in his most complete show as captain, making a measured ton and nipping in with two wickets apiece in each innings. His captaincy on day five at Rawalpindi could just as easily have made it in here.

**WHAT NEXT?** An Ashes and another 50-over World Cup, anyone?

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "He's in that stage of his life where he wants to do something significant and make a real impact, not just on the game but on other people's careers." ***Brendon McCullum***

81.81

**Stokes' win percentage as Test captain. The highest of any captain to have skippered a minimum of 10 Tests**

# 7. RISHABH PANT

**INDIA**

**7 Tests, 680 runs at 61.81, 2 hundreds, 4 fifties; 23 catches, 6 stumpings**

**71% of our panel voted for him**

The true heir to Adam Gilchrist and perhaps good enough to one day eclipse him. The numbers are epic: Pant has now made 11 scores of 90 or more in just 56 Test innings. He has made Test hundreds in England, Australia and South Africa. Among keepers who have made 2,000 Test runs, his average lags behind only AB de Villiers, Andy Flower and his spirit father, Gilchrist.

**THE STANDOUT**

**146 (111 balls, 19 fours, 4 sixes)**

**England v India | Fifth Test, Edgbaston, July 2022**

Five down for 96, Pant's counter-assault included one-handed sixes, reverse laps and leg-side flicks with both feet nailed to the floor. This was Pant in full cry. As audacious as any cricketer the game has seen.

**WHAT NEXT?** At approximately 5:30am on December 30, Rishabh Pant was driving on the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway to visit his mother when he fell asleep at the wheel. The vehicle hit the road divider and twice flipped over, with Pant managing to shatter the windscreen and escape just moments before it exploded. He was rushed to hospital in Dehradun where he was stabilised, and four days later, was airlifted to Mumbai for urgent surgery on one of the two ligament tears in his knee. While initial MRIs indicate that his brain and spine are undamaged, he will continue for some time to be treated for his injuries and there is no indication when he may return to full health. It will be a deep joy and relief to see him again on the cricket field.

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "Pant is in a league of his own. The most entertaining cricketer in the world." ***Virender Sehwag***

# 8. PAT CUMMINS

**AUSTRALIA**

**10 Tests, 36 wickets at 21.83, 2 five-wicket hauls; 143 runs at 15.88**

**77% of our panel voted for him**

The Australian Test skipper has held top spot in the ICC's bowling rankings since August 2019 and shows no signs of surrendering his crown. Cummins retains his place in our side after another year of relentless brilliance in which he guided his team to the most emphatic of Ashes victories, a landmark win in Pakistan and a thrashing of South Africa – and still found time to wage war on climate change. The 29-year-old is growing in stature as a leader, allaying fears that the burden of captaincy would weigh too heavily on his shoulders.

**THE STANDOUT**

**5-56 (24 overs) & 3-23 (15.1 overs)**

**Pakistan v Australia | Third Test, Lahore, March 2022**

After two Tests of back-breaking toil on the flattest of decks at Rawalpindi and Karachi, Cummins was imperious in the series-decider, breaking open the match with a first-innings five-for, making a bold declaration in Australia's second dig, and then sealing the contest by dismantling Naseem Shah's stumps to collect his eighth wicket of the match.

**WHAT NEXT?** This is a year full of opportunity for Cummins. He will be bidding to become the first Australian skipper to win in India since 2004, the first to win an Ashes series in England for 22 years, and the first ever to lift the World Test Championship trophy, with his side almost certain of their place in the final at The Oval in June. Should he fail to deliver on all three of those, the Justin Langer supporters who blame Cummins for the former coach's exit will be making their voices heard with added gusto.

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "Cummins is extraordinary the way he is able to just keep coming. He never lets up, every single ball. He's been an inspired choice as captain." ***Rob Key***

**21.29**

**Cummins' Test bowling average. Of the 81 bowlers to take 200 or more Test wickets, only Malcolm Marshall, Joel Garner and Curtly Ambrose have a lower average**

## 9. MARCO JANSEN

**SOUTH AFRICA**

**8 Tests, 36 wickets at 19.02, 1 five-wicket haul; 234 runs at 21.27, 1 fifty**

**74% of our panel voted for him**

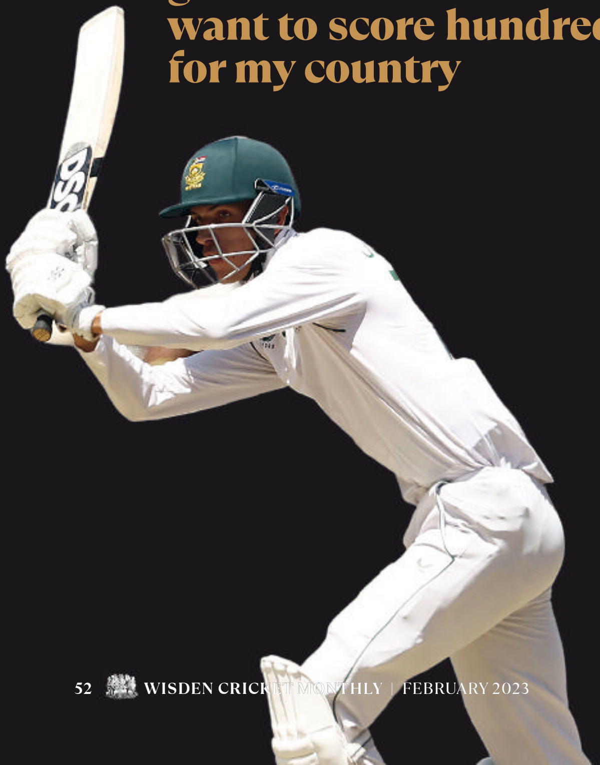
**THE STANDOUT**

**3-55 (18 overs) & 4-36 (19.3 overs)**
**South Africa v India | Third Test, Cape Town, January 2022**
Having picked up seven wickets at Joburg a week earlier to help the Proteas level the series, Jansen was perhaps even more impressive in the decider at Newlands, taking the key wicket of Pant in India's first dig and dismissing Pujara in each innings to finish with seven in the match and announce the arrival of a new star.

**WHAT NEXT?** With South Africa's Test schedule looking depressingly meagre, Jansen will have plenty of opportunity to work on his white-ball skills, with T20 franchises queuing up for his services and a 50-over World Cup in October.

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "He is a phenomenal talent and an awkward customer to face. There is swing, bounce and pace coming at you." ***Kagiso Rabada***, who earned 61% of the vote and was pipped to a place in our side by his teammate

> " I want to be seen as a genuine all-rounder. I want to score hundreds for my country



**WORDS** DANIEL GALLAN

Some Test nations are famous for their left-arm quicks. South Africa is not one of them. In fact, between April 18, 1992 (when South Africa were reintroduced to international cricket after their apartheid-era ban) and December 26, 2021, five South African southpaws who bowl seam up took a collective 68 wickets. In this time, New Zealand's lefties bagged 720 wickets, Pakistan's 710 and Australia's 671. Only Afghanistan's left-armers contributed fewer wickets than the Proteas'.

This is why Marco Jansen has garnered so much attention on Africa's southern tip. He made his debut as a 21-year-old in the 2021 Boxing Day Test at Centurion against India and immediately turned heads. He roughed up Virat Kohli, got under Jasprit Bumrah's skin, and snared five wickets across the Test. He varied his length, moved it both ways through the air and off the seam, and gave his more experienced opponents a mouthful. In short, he looked like the real deal.

"I was nervous, of course, but I wanted to show that I belonged at that level," said Jansen during the three-match series in England last summer, in which he took nine wickets at 13.11 from two Tests and notched useful runs from №7. "It was important that I came across in that way. I want to be a player that others take seriously. Me and my brother [Duan, also a first-class cricketer]

PHOTO BY RODGER BOSCH

have always been like that. When we cross the rope it's serious and we want to perform."

Having the right attitude certainly helps, but gumption can only take you so far. Luckily for Jansen, he has the raw materials to thrive. For starters, he's 6ft 8in tall, seemingly built of nothing more than muscle and sinew. If you saw him move on a dance floor he might come across as ungainly, all elbows and knees. But place a cricket ball in his hand and watch him glide across the turf like a water strider across a lake. He gathers in his bowling action with minimal fuss and unfurls his long limbs with a fluidity that should – touch wood – give him a good chance of remaining largely injury free.

"I trust my body," he said last year. "I know my height is a big talking point. People naturally focus on it. There are times when people look at you in a certain way. But it's such a bonus for me. It helps me hit a length and it can be uncomfortable for the batsman. I look at the success that Morne Morkel had for the Proteas, and I know that a lot of batters won't want to face me if the wicket is bouncy. I enjoy being tall."

He's proved a handful on a variety of surfaces. He bowled back of a length against India on a spicy Wanderers surface last January to pick up seven wickets, and claimed six when he pitched it up on a seaming Christchurch deck a month later. At The Oval last September, on a strip which strongly favoured the bowlers, he kept it simple to register his first Test five-wicket haul.

That match ended in ignominy for the Proteas, as England twice bowled them out for under 200 to claim a nine-wicket win and with it a fourth consecutive series triumph. Jansen was the solitary shining light for the tourists, top-scoring in South Africa's first innings with 30 having made a sprightly 48 in the series opener at Lord's.

"I want to be seen as a genuine all-rounder," he said. "I want to score hundreds for my country. I believe I can do it." Perhaps he will. He averages 20.46 at the time of writing and registered his maiden half-century in a gutsy display against Australia in the recent Boxing Day Test at Melbourne. He has stated his desire to bat at seven, and has done so in five of his 15 visits to the crease, but this feels a place too high at present. Eight would be a more natural fit, if only a better-balanced side could be built around him.

That may be a moot point. South Africa will not play another three-Test series until 2026. They're scheduled to play just four Tests this year with three of them coming before the end of March. Between now and 2027, the Proteas will not play any Tests in England or Australia, and they have only one series in India.

In a more equitable world, Jansen would be establishing himself as a generational Test star. A player that combines rare athletic gifts with the requisite mongrel. A menacing bowler who fancies himself with the bat and catches pigeons in the gully. He rightly makes this composite team for 2022. One wonders if he'll get the chance to be part of it again.

ABOVE: Jansen tears in at Newlands in his breakthrough series against India

# COACH OF THE YEAR

## BRENDON MCCULLUM

### ENGLAND TEST COACH

**Record: Played 10 | Won 9 | Lost 1**

**WORDS** PHIL WALKER

Many years ago, the England football team was managed by a chap called Glenn Hoddle. The story goes that one day he decided to do a session with the squad's free-kick takers. Man-management was never really Glenn's strongest suit, but boy could he hit a dead ball, and so, after wincing through a cluster of shanks and pea rollers from the lads, Glenn thought he'd show them how to do it, stepping up to curl a few beauties into top bins. Glenn was thrilled. He still had it. But the lads? The lads weren't having it. They chuntered and muttered. *Becks* wasn't happy, the story got out, and thus the delicate equilibrium between coach and player was further weakened.

That England team wasn't as happy as today's cricketing equivalent. Not many are. Indeed, the Stokes-McCullum cult can lay claim to being perhaps the most nauseatingly harmonious sports team on the planet; so much so, that when a six-hitting contest the day before the Karachi Test results in a win for McCullum, prompting Stokes to hurl his bat to the skies in abject defeat, the scene plays out less like one of Glenn's misreads than a schmaltzy buddy movie, dripping with the lathered affections of two alphas in thrall to each other's magnificence. Neither can quit the other.

It's objectively one of the great appointments. If Stokes (in the cold light of day) was the only viable choice, then who honestly foresaw McCullum – white-ball beast, IPL speculator, Kolkata hitter-honcho – as his right-hand man? Well, Rob Key soon did. As indeed did the equally mesmerised Andrew Strauss, tasked with advising the ECB's top brass.

His interview is the stuff of legend. "He knocked it out the park," said Strauss. "He keeps the game of cricket very simple but he's got a positive intent in everything he does. I know Brendon is just so excited about the prospect of not just trying to take the English cricket team forward but also doing his bit to take Test cricket forward generally."

Talk to the players and they speak in awe of his style, his charisma, of his way of sitting in perfect physical poise behind his wraparounds and in sentences of no more than seven words telling his audience what's about to happen a beat before it does. When they get down, he speaks up. When they do well, he smiles. At Lord's in May, where all this started, they were low after another batting collapse. That night McCullum gathered them round, cracked a beer, and told them how much fun he'd had watching them have a dart at this great thing called cricket. It sounds basic. It is basic. But basic is what cricketers need. Most of the time, remember, their heads are a riot.

He backs his players, often to the mob's displeasure. When Zak Crawley was supported beyond what many felt was fair, McCullum offered this response: "The last two guys who nailed it at the top of the order are both called 'Sir' in this country, so it's not an easy thing to do." It matters not whether you buy that argument; just imagine being Zak Crawley, and hearing that.

"I don't really do a lot, to be honest," he said last autumn, two months before embarking on that epochal whitewash in Pakistan. "I just let the guys do what they're born to do – play cricket in the style and manner they want and make sure they're enjoying themselves." Just like that. Oh, and if he can revolutionise Test cricket in the process, he'll probably take that too.

PHOTO BY NATHAN STIRK

## 10. NATHAN LYON

**AUSTRALIA**

**11 Tests, 47 wickets at 29.06, 3 five-wicket hauls; 146 runs at 18.25**

**65% of our panel voted for him**

Nathan Lyon reclaims the spinner's berth he lost to Ravichandran Ashwin last year after finishing as 2022's joint leading wicket-taker (alongside Kagiso Rabada). He was impressive on Australia's tour of Sri Lanka, and steady rather than prolific in Pakistan. But on home soil, where opposition spinners are generally tormented, Lyon has got spin bowling down to a fine art. Since November 2019, the 35-year-old has taken 72 wickets at 25.86 in 19 home Tests.

### THE STANDOUT

**5-90 (25 overs) & 4-31 (11 overs)**

**Sri Lanka v Australia | First Test, Galle, June/July 2022**

Lyon made full use of a spinning top at Galle, steering Australia to a first Test win in Sri Lanka since 2011 before lunch on the third day. Using his natural overspin to find appreciable bounce, Lyon bowled unchanged through Sri Lanka's second innings as the hosts were skittled for 113 in 22.5 overs, with Pat Cummins declaring his spinner "unplayable".

**WHAT NEXT?** If Australia are to stand any chance in India in February/March, Lyon will need to lead the way on pitches which will offer sharp turn. His subsequent assignment will be in England, where the home side's ultra-aggressive batting line-up will look to hit him out of the attack. How that particular battles plays out could be one of the decisive factors in the series.

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "Lyon is the most important bowler in our team." ***Pat Cummins***

**8**

**Lyon's dismissal of Alzarri Joseph at Sydney in December made him the eighth bowler in Test history to reach the milestone of 450 wickets**

## 11. JAMES ANDERSON

**ENGLAND**

**9 Tests, 36 wickets at 19.80, 1 five-wicket haul; 44 runs at 7.33**

**77% of our panel voted for him**

Dropped last February for the tour of the Caribbean, it looked as though Jimmy's incomparable Test career may have come to an abrupt end. Now, after a year in which he registered his best bowling average since 2017, and the second best of his entire career, he is, at the age of 40, integral to England's short-term future. Anderson says he felt immediately re-energised under the stewardship of Stokes and McCullum and he has bought into the team's new attacking mindset while maintaining a stranglehold on the opposition. His delivery to dismiss Mohammad Rizwan at Multan – a beauty which came in on the angle before jagging away sharply to peg back off stump – was among the very best of his staggering career haul.

### THE STANDOUT

**4-66 (16 overs)**

**England v New Zealand | First Test, Lord's, June 2022**

Vintage Anderson. Recalled for the first Test of the summer, it was like he'd never been away. Returning figures of 6-5-4-2 in his first spell, getting rid of both Kiwi openers with classic new-ball dismissals, he went on to pick up two lower-order wickets to confirm that his race had distance left to run.

**WHAT NEXT?** 700! He needs 25 wickets to become only the third player to reach the landmark and he will begin that mission in New Zealand in February before embarking on his 10th Ashes series.

**WHAT THEY SAY:** "For Jimmy to keep his standards and fitness levels as high as he has, to keep improving his skills as he has over the last six/seven years, that's the difference when you look at good cricketers and greats. The greats are the ones that keep evolving." ***Andrew Strauss***

**2.42**

**Anderson's economy rate for 2022. Among bowlers who took 20 or more wickets, only Australia's Scott Boland was more economical**

# WOMEN'S CROSS-FORMAT XI

The *Wisden* writers pick an all-star team covering all international cricket in 2022

### 1. SMRITI MANDHANA
**INDIA**

**15 ODIs, 696 runs at 49.71, 1 hundred, 6 fifties | 23 T20Is, 594 runs at 33, 5 fifties**

The silky-smooth southpaw retains her place after another stellar 12 months in which she finished as the leading T20I run-scorer from a Full Member nation and passed 50 in seven of her 15 ODI knocks. Mandhana's last notable score of the year – a sumptuous 49-ball 79 in a nail-biting T20I at Mumbai – inflicted defeat on Australia for the first and only time in 2022 and provided further evidence that when in full flow, not even the best can shackle her.

### 2. ALYSSA HEALY (WK)
**AUSTRALIA**

**1 Test, 0 runs at 0; 3 catches | 12 ODIs, 600 runs at 50, 2 hundreds, 2 fifties; 8 catches, 4 stumpings | 15 T20Is, 171 runs at 17.1; 6 catches, 3 stumpings**

The Aussie stumper was in patchy form for much of the year – particularly in T20Is – but her outrageous knocks at the business end of the World Cup (129 from 107 in the semi against West Indies and 170 from 138 in the final versus England) made Healy a shoo-in for this side.

### 3. LAURA WOLVAARDT
**SOUTH AFRICA**

**1 Test, 32 runs at 16 | 18 ODIs, 882 runs at 49, 1 hundred, 8 fifties | 9 T20Is, 188 runs at 37.60, 1 fifty**

Five half-centuries in eight innings guided South Africa to the semi-finals of the World Cup in March and the 23-year-old opener went on to enjoy the most prolific year of her career to date. The 50-over format still best suits Wolvaardt's classical style, giving her time to ease into an innings before unfurling her trademark drives, but she is now a much more adaptable player than the teenager who burst onto the scene six years ago. With Lizelle Lee – who made our XI last year – stepping away from international cricket, the Proteas' brittle batting line-up relies heavily on their star performer.

### 4. BETH MOONEY
**AUSTRALIA**

**1 Test, 66 runs at 33, 1 fifty | 10 ODIs, 403 runs at 100.75, 3 fifties | 14 T20Is, 449 runs at 56.12, 4 fifties**

Ranked by the ICC as the №2 batter in both the ODI and T20I formats, Mooney was irrepressible in 2022. She opened the year by notching a half-century and taking a screamer of a catch in the Ashes Test while nursing a broken jaw and she was broadly immovable thereafter, averaging over 100 from the middle order in ODIs and consistently getting her team off to a flyer in the shortest format (no one who scored as many T20I runs made them at a faster rate). In the absence of skipper Meg Lanning, Mooney has established herself as Australia's most valuable cross-format batter.

### 5. NAT SCIVER
**ENGLAND**

**2 Tests, 242 runs at 121, 1 hundred, 1 fifty; 5 wickets at 22.2 | 17 ODIs, 833 runs at 59.5, 2 hundreds, 5 fifties; 11 wickets at 46.09 | 14 T20Is, 271 runs at 27.1; 6 wickets at 38.33**

Sciver's selection in our team last year was a close call – this time around it's indisputable. Her 148* in April's showpiece final against Australia (her second hundred of the tournament against the eventual champions) was one of the great World Cup knocks and her ODI run tally for the year – which included five 50-plus scores in her last six innings – was only surpassed by Wolvaardt. Having turned 30 last August, Sciver is now grinding out runs when she's not at her best, as well as delivering masterclasses on the biggest of occasions.

## 6. HARMANPREET KAUR (C)
### INDIA

**17 ODIs, 754 runs at 58, 2 hundreds, 5 fifties; 5 wickets at 36.2 | 22 T20Is, 524 runs at 32.75, 2 fifties; 2 wickets at 46.5**

Curiously, India's supremely talented skipper began 2022 having not passed three figures in ODIs since her innings for the ages in the 2017 World Cup semi-final, when she pulverised Australia's attack (171* from 143 balls) and catapulted her team into the final. Her form had been wretched for much of that period, but Harmanpreet exploded back into life last year, blitzing a run-a-ball ODI ton against West Indies in March and then shredding England's attack at Canterbury with an 111-ball 143*, re-establishing her credentials as perhaps the most watchable ball-striker in the game.

## 7. AMELIA KERR
### NEW ZEALAND

**18 ODIs, 676 runs at 56.33, 1 hundred, 4 fifties; 17 wickets at 39.29 | 14 T20Is, 327 runs at 32.7; 13 wickets at 22.84**

The leg-spinning all-rounder locked in her place with a landmark ODI series against India in February, when she made 353 runs across five innings. Having taken a break from the game in 2021 for mental health reasons, Kerr says she's now reaping the rewards and relishing her new role at №3.

## 8. TAHLIA MCGRATH
### AUSTRALIA

**1 Test, 86 runs at 43, 1 fifty; 2 wickets at 30.5 | 11 ODIs, 148 runs at 29.6, 1 fifty; 11 wickets at 24.81 | 435 runs at 62.14, 4 fifties; 13 wickets at 12.84**

After nearly four years out of the international set-up, McGrath's career is now moving at pace. In December she rose to №1 in the ICC's T20I batting rankings after a sparkling series against India in which she captained the side in the absence of Lanning and Healy. Now an essential cog in the Australian machine across all formats, the 27-year-old all-rounder, who skippered Adelaide Strikers to their maiden WBBL title in November, is staking a strong claim for the national captaincy on a permanent basis.

## 9. DEEPTI SHARMA
### INDIA

**16 ODIs, 287 runs at 35.87, 2 fifties; 22 wickets at 27.59 | 25 T20Is, 370 runs at 37, 2 fifties; 29 wickets at 18.55**

The Indian all-rounder's headline-grabbing moment of 2022 came at Lord's in September, when she controversially ran-out Charlie Dean, but that is not a fair reflection of her year. Sharma was named Player of the Tournament as India scooped the Asia Cup in October and her T20I economy rate of 6.07 across 2022 reveals just how difficult her canny off-breaks are to get away. Having also recaptured her form with the bat, the 25-year-old is hitting her prime.

## 10. SOPHIE ECCLESTONE
### ENGLAND

**2 Tests, 69 runs at 34.50; 3 wickets at 67 | 20 ODIs, 198 runs at 18; 34 wickets at 19.14, 1 five-for | 17 T20Is, 72 runs at 36; 19 wickets at 17.89**

Ecclestone retains her place after another unerringly consistent year. With the exception of the Ashes Test last January, when she struggled for rhythm, the left-arm spinner was immaculate, comfortably topping the wicket-taking charts at the World Cup to reaffirm her position as the game's premier spinner. She now sits top of the ICC bowling rankings in ODI and T20I cricket. Her clean hitting also continues to develop nicely – the 26 runs she hit from an over against South Africa in July set a new record for an English woman.

## 11. SHABNIM ISMAIL
### SOUTH AFRICA

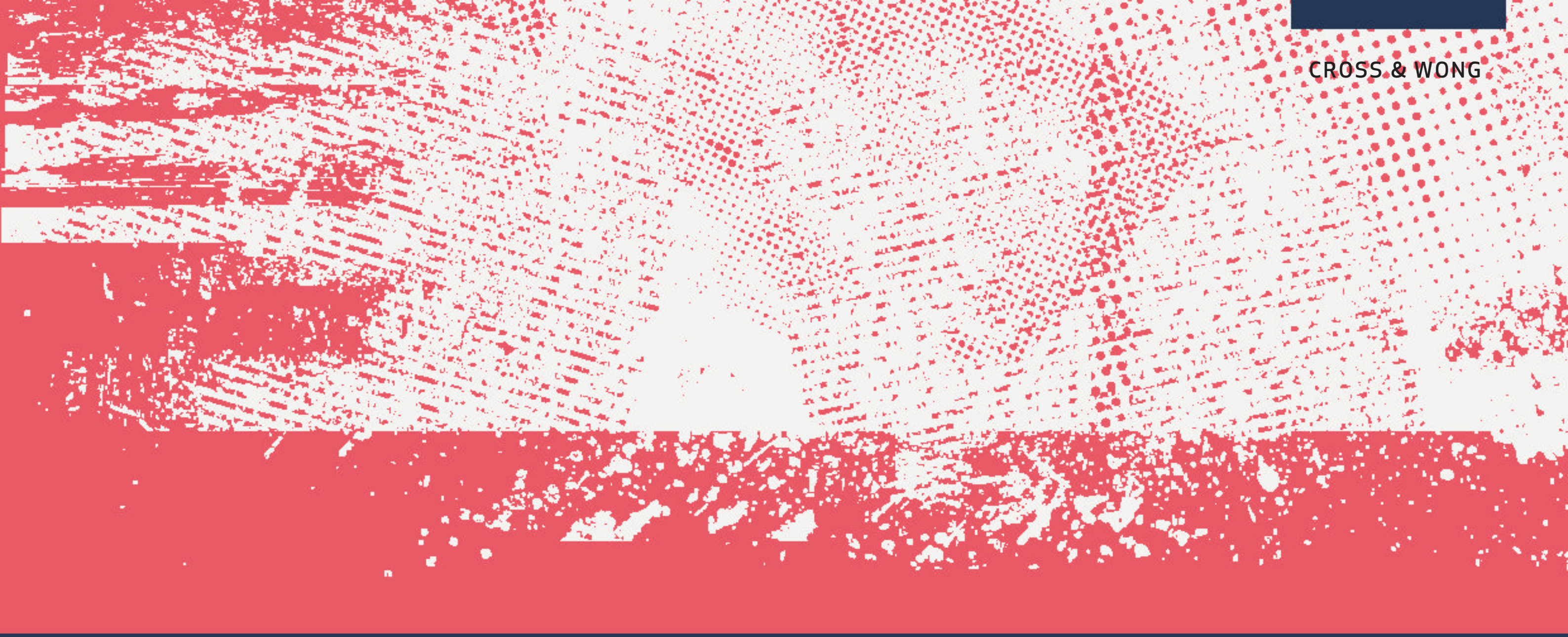
**17 ODIs, 42 runs at 5.25; 37 wickets at 14.89, 1 five-for | 7 T20Is, 4 runs at N/A; 5 wickets at 32.60**

Now 34, the South African speedster shows no signs of slowing down. The 37 ODI scalps Ismail collected in 2022 put her top of the pile and moved her into second place in the all-time list, with only India's Jhulan Goswami ahead of her. Operating at a touch under 130kph, at times she was simply too hot to handle – as Ireland found to their cost in June when she returned figures of 5-8 in Dublin.

A.KER
MCGRATH
ENGLAND
BYJU'S
SOUTH AFR

# BRING THE NOISE

Women's cricket has found its voice, and you'd better be listening. Phil Walker speaks to some of those on the frontline of a revolution



PHIL
WALKER

*Wisden Cricket Monthly* editor-in-chief
@Phil_Wisden

In July last year, Kate Cross and Issy Wong came together to spearhead England's Test attack, taking nine of the 15 South African wickets to fall in a game that but for the weather would have built to a cracking climax.

In many respects they're natural partners, both bustling right-arm seamers who run in hard, strain for the cause and speak fulsomely about it afterwards. Neither lack for charisma nor presence. Both, too, are natural frontwomen for The Hundred, and by extension the women's game as a whole. On the flipside, they are separated by 10 years and a world of experience.

Cross, now 31, came through at a hinge point in the struggle for professionalisation. She recalls in the early days feeling grateful just for the chance to play. In 2008, aged 15, she became the first girl to be accepted on Lancashire's academy. It was a story at the time, with Cross rolled out as a nascent sign of progress. The sense of being thankful just to be recognised would have been a hard one to shake.

Wong, by contrast, strides into a functioning set-up that demands to know what it means and where it's going. "There wasn't too much adjustment," the 20-year-old tells WCM of her transition from schoolgirl to international cricketer. She knew what she wanted and backed herself to get it. But for Wong to have that confidence to inform her careers advisor that cricket was the job for her, others before her had to bash the door down. It's not lost on her. "Someone of Crossy's generation, she's left school, she wants to be a cricketer, but there's only a certain number of them. So there's additional pressure there. But for people like myself and [teenage England star] Alice Capsey, it's all we've ever known."

Wong and Cross are among 19 centrally contracted England players. Additionally, last year the ECB funded professional contracts for 48 domestic players. From February 1, that number will swell to 80. For 2023, English cricket will have 99 professional female cricketers.

Where once the notion of an 'industry' around women's cricket would have seemed implausible, nowadays the female game generates its own oxygen. The line used to be that women's cricket needed the establishment in order to survive. That adage has been flipped on its head.

Last month the ECB published the numbers. Some of these numbers are intrinsically tied into The Hundred: the record 20,840 attending the women's final at Lord's, for instance; or the fact that 28 per cent of all ticket buyers for all matches in The Hundred are female, up from 21 per cent in 2021. Other numbers are more general, but not unrelated: 12 per cent more clubs (1,050) are now offering women and girls the chance to play cricket since 2019, contributing to a 75 per cent increase in registered teams across England and Wales – making it 3,586 at the last count – while at Lord's in August, over 15,000 turned up to watch an England-India ODI – another record.

Every so often, the intoxicating cynicism of our times seems a little out of whack.

For all the noise around The Hundred, only the most entrenched refuse to acknowledge the good it does for women's cricket. "I think the people who make those comments are the people who don't take the women's game into consideration," says Cross. "My argument is always, if we can get the balance right there is room for everything. The bigger picture is more important."

For decades, says Beth Barrett-Wild, head of the Women's Hundred for the ECB, women's cricket was stuck in a vicious cycle of under-investment, limited coverage, scant sponsorship and stunted growth. The vicious, she says, has now become the virtuous. "What we're now doing is investing in the right areas – and I know it sounds very ECB, that it's all about the money and the marketing – but it is so important, in terms of visibility. The Hundred has given it vast visibility and scale at a pace that, if we'd tried to do it incrementally, it wouldn't have had the same impact."

Credit where it's due. English cricket has expanded its female talent pool, deepened its professional resources and helped turn the women's game into

> “Dottin has broken away from her domestic board contract to pursue franchise gigs around the world. Just as we’ve seen with the men, there are riches to be had over yonder.

ABOVE: Deandra Dottin: the world game’s most prominent freelance women’s cricketer

RIGHT: Suzie Bates contends that franchise cricket is of a better standard than international cricket

one of the fastest growing team sports in the country. But the battle for true equality – as reflected in the most obvious measure, the pay packet – has barely got started. The first iteration of The Hundred, packaged of course as a joint venture (EQUAL PRIZE MONEY!!!) was in fact a starkly unbalanced affair, with the top female contract (£15k) barely a 10th of the top-priced men’s gig. While the second year saw some recalibration, the pay gap remains vast.

“I don’t think I should earn 125 grand playing in The Hundred,” says Cross. “I don’t think women’s cricket is there yet. But give us the equal opportunity. That’s what has been lacking so much. A male cricketer coming up through the academies and age-group cricket has played 10 times as much cricket as I have. That’s what’s been missing for me – and with that, you need help with money. We’re not after equal pay, we’re after equal opportunities.”

Cross suspects that in the next five years, the argument over pay will start changing dramatically. “As you’ve seen with the Lionesses, it does change very quickly, and that *gratefulness* of getting the opportunity and getting paid will turn into: ‘Well, hang on a minute, without women in The Hundred, have you got a product? Probably not.’ So it might be time to start paying everyone a little bit more fairly…”

The balance now, she adds, is to ensure that international cricket is still protected, “and you don’t lose any more players like Deandra Dottin, who might end up going round the world playing franchise cricket because there’s more money in that”.

Dottin, the brilliant Barbadian all-rounder, is a bellwether for the women’s game’s next big challenge. Along with South Africa’s Lizelle Lee, Dottin has broken away from her national contract to pursue franchise gigs around the world. Just as we’ve seen with the men, there are riches to be had over yonder.

Having agency over one’s career is a dizzyingly new phenomenon. Suzie Bates was 25 and had already been a New Zealand international for seven years when she received her first professional contract, since when she’s been able to build a tidy life. “You do have to pinch yourself,” she tells WCM, “and it’s kind of hard to talk about, because as a female you always hoped and felt that you deserved to get more resource and be treated like that, but it was also difficult to see that happening any time soon. Part of you feels really grateful, but then the other part of you doesn’t want to show that you expected any less.”

So when Bates, a legend of the sport, quietly observes that “franchise cricket standards are higher than at international level”, the game needs to sit up and listen. Cross concurs: “It’s a huge wake-up call to governing bodies that you can’t take these once-in-a-generation players like Deandra Dottin for granted.”

Barrett-Wild is under no illusions either. “They’re going to come for the women’s game. It’s going to happen. There’s a big role for the ICC to play in this in terms of how things are aligned. We’re in a place where we don’t have these massive clashes yet, but what is interesting is that in a world of increasing choices, you’re going to see players at the top-end picking and choosing what tournaments to feature in.”

As if to emphasise the point, in early January the BCCI opened the bidding process for the women’s IPL for its inaugural season, inviting interested parties to purchase teams. Those interested must pay £6k just to download the ‘invitation to tender’, which sets out the eligibility criteria. A salary cap per team of $6m has been mooted, more than 15 times the figure in the Women's Big Bash League. "Get ready for the shift," says Barrett-Wild. The WIPL is coming, and the market's about to blow.

Fame too is on the way. This summer's Ashes will be launched as a joint extravaganza, with its stories and personalities closely aligned. Cross already fronts up the excellent No Balls BBC podcast, using her voice to "enlighten people on what women's cricket is like", while Wong is part of a new breed of player conditioned to the spotlight from a young age. Articulate and ambitious, Wong is a natural poster-woman for a game desperately trying to open itself up. "I guess I deal with it pretty well," she says. "It's something you've got to embrace, because that's how the game grows. A sport only grows as much as the personalities within it make people want to watch. It's only as good as the personalities who play it, and I want the next generation of young girls to have as much opportunity to play cricket as I have."

In the meantime, in the short window before cricket's next sonic boom, there's a T20 World Cup to play. Cross is part of England's squad, with Wong waiting in the wings. While Australia's dominance hangs heavy over any world tournament, the shortest format, in slippery South African conditions, offers the chance of an upset.

Australia, with all that light and space and those long-established central contracts, will probably win the gong, but the game will win the day. "The overall standard has improved naturally because you've got more players spending more time on task," says Bates. "Across the board, everyone's bowling faster and hitting the ball harder." And that, in the end, is why we're having this conversation. As Barrett-Wild says, "You can spend millions of pounds telling everybody about this thing, but it's got to be *really good*."

## The 2023 Women's T20 World Cup

**Host: South Africa**
**Venues: Paarl, Cape Town, Gqeberha**
**Duration: February 10-26**

**Group 1: Australia, Bangladesh,New Zealand, South Africa, Sri Lanka**
**Group 2: England, India, Ireland, Pakistan, West Indies**

### Fixtures:

***Fri, Feb 10***
South Africa v Sri Lanka, Cape Town, 5pm

***Sat, Feb 11***
West Indies v England, Paarl, 1pm
Australia v New Zealand, Paarl, 5pm

***Sun, Feb 12***
India v Pakistan, Cape Town, 1pm
Bangladesh v Sri Lanka, Cape Town, 5pm

***Mon, Feb 13***
Ireland v England, Paarl, 1pm
South Africa v New Zealand, Paarl, 5pm

***Tues, Feb 14***
Australia v Bangladesh, Gqeberha, 5pm

***Wed, Feb 15***
West Indies v India, Cape Town, 1pm
Pakistan v Ireland, Cape Town, 5pm

***Thurs, Feb 16***
Sri Lanka v Australia, Gqeberha, 1pm

***Fri, Feb 17***
New Zealand v Bangladesh, Cape Town, 1pm
West indies v Bangladesh, Cape Town, 5pm

***Sat, Feb 18***
England v India, Gqeberha, 1pm
South Africa v Australia, Gqeberha, 5pm

***Sun, Feb 19***
Pakistan v West Indies, Paarl, 1pm
New Zealand v Sri Lanka, Paarl, 5pm

***Mon, Feb 20***
India v Ireland, Gqeberha, 1pm

***Tues, Feb 21***
England v Pakistan, Cape Town, 1pm
South Africa v Bangladesh, Cape Town, 5pm

***Thurs, Feb 23***
Semi-final 1 v Semi-final 2, Cape Town, 1pm

***Fri, Feb 24***
Semi-final 3 v Semi-final 4, Cape Town, 1pm

***Sun, Feb 26***
The Final, Cape Town, 1pm

*(All times listed are GMT)*

# The team that wouldn't die

After years of struggle, Zimbabwean cricket is thriving again, unified behind a legendary coach who had to be coaxed out of retirement. Liam Brickhill reports from a country where the game of cricket remains as vibrant and cherished as ever

ERVINE
77
CHAKABVA
5

LIAM BRICKHILL

**Freelance cricket writer based in Zimbabwe**

It is the rainy season in Zimbabwe, and the entire country is carpeted in green. Every year, this place undergoes a remarkable transformation with the coming of the rains. When the heavens open, the soil offers a telluric blessing, a faint petrichor that tells us this: a desiccated land deadened by the annual drought has somehow come back to life. Where there had been just dust and bone, now everywhere something sprouts and grows. Even on that greensward temple, the cricket field.

Not so long ago, Zimbabwean cricket was known only for mismanagement, dysfunction and bankruptcy. Not a year ago, they lost their greatest batter of the last two decades, and the coda of Brendan Taylor's playing career will forever be scandal and shame. Yet, with just a little nurturing, cricket here has somehow sprung back to near full bloom.

The most visible symbol of this transformation has been the rise of Sikandar Raza. Eighteen months ago, a bone marrow infection almost ended his career. Yet here he stands, Zimbabwe's talisman, approaching his mission with the singular focus of a revenant, raising the team around him with runs, wickets, catches and energy. Not given to self-promotion, the first thing he does when asked about his ascent is big up his teammates.

"It has been a great year for Zimbabwe, it really has," he tells WCM. "I'm not big on personal highlights. My personal highlight would have to be a game where Zimbabwe won. Zimbabwe, as a team, is definitely going forward. Zimbabwe, as a team, achieved a lot of good things. Zimbabwe, as a team, brought a lot of fans back. Zimbabwe, as a team, brought a lot of happiness to the faces of Zimbabweans."

Despite his humility, it's clear that Raza has been central to Zimbabwe's revival. A man who studied software engineering in Scotland, and might have been a fighter pilot in Pakistan, has become a national hero in a small southern African nation. Yet he hasn't done it all alone. Blessing Muzarabani returned from a stint with Northants to bring lift, nip and menace to the new-ball attack, and Raza's middle-order boshing has been ably – and vitally – supported at different times by Ryan Burl, Regis Chakabva, Sean Williams, Innocent Kaia, and captain Craig Ervine. Raza insists that the credit for bringing all these moving parts together lies with one man: Dave Houghton.

"The man just came and transformed all of us. From the culture that was missing in the changing room, to the performances that were missing on the park. The key, it's definitely him."

> **Houghton wanted to create an institution that would ensure a future for the sport in this country, and not simply bask in a storied, gloried past. "We need to develop a cricket culture in Zimbabwe," he said. "Cricket should not be seen as an elitist sport"**

MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP AUSTRALIA 2022

BELOW: Dave Houghton has overseen a stirring upturn in Zimbabwe's fortunes

Raza's comeback has been extraordinary, but Houghton's has been no less remarkable, though his work has been carried out backstage, out of sight. This is, of course, not Houghton's first tenure as Zimbabwe coach. A former policeman, and sales rep with tobacco company Rothmans, Houghton eventually settled on cricket in his late 20s, gluing Zimbabwe's middle order together for much of the Eighties and Nineties before coaching them into the Super Sixes at the 1999 World Cup. While he moved into coaching English county sides thereafter, Houghton never abandoned his connections to his homeland. He did, however, have to be coaxed, somewhat, back into the country's top coaching role.

"I didn't really want to be a head coach again," Houghton explains. "I was trying to wend my way into

ABOVE: Sikandar Raza, the first Zimbabwean to be nominated for the ICC's Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy – awarded to the men's international cricketer of the year

retirement. Having said that, I've had a lot of fun over the last six months, and really enjoyed it. And while I've still got my physical fitness, then I'd like to carry on with these guys. But I don't think it's going to be an extended, long stay. I want to get them to a position where I think they're playing really good cricket. Most importantly I'd like to mentor some of the other coaches coming through, so when the time does come for me to move on, and for the next person to come in, it can just be a very simple move upwards for whoever is next in line."

Houghton, a practitioner of the reverse sweep when almost no one else played it, has always had one eye on the future. In the late 1990s, he walked 400km across the country to raise funds to build a cricket academy in Harare. He wanted to create an institution that would ensure a future for the sport in this country, and not simply bask in a storied, gloried past. "We need to develop a cricket culture in Zimbabwe," he said at the time. "Cricket should not be seen as an elitist sport."

That vision has, without a doubt, come to pass. Cricket is a truly national sport in Zimbabwe, and the team's every recent success has been cheered by their vibrant, travelling fan club. Calling themselves the Zimbabwe Cricket Supporters Union, the group have brought song, dance and joy to every game their team has played in the last year, through a vital qualifying campaign, and all the way through the T20 World Cup in Australia. Those who couldn't make it to Australia gathered en masse at Harare Sports Club to watch the games on telly with as much vim and energy as would have been brought to a live game. The scenes at HSC went viral. Had one or two results gone Zimbabwe's way, those fans might have sung their joy in a World Cup semi-final for the very first time.

"Looking back on the World Cup now, I'm a little disappointed we didn't go further, because we lost one game on the last ball, and then we got beaten by Holland, and by then we'd run out of steam," Houghton says. "There was some mental and physical fatigue. To be honest, I think if we'd got over the line against Bangladesh in Brisbane, it would have carried us with a bit more momentum, but having not got over that line, I just felt like we'd punctured our tyre. You could just feel the energy sapping. But apart from those two games, it's been an incredible improvement. The real test will come now, though. Can we carry it on? Can we get better and better?"

While there was plenty to celebrate Down Under, in another sense the result didn't seem to matter. Zimbabweans were simply revelling in the fact that their team was there at all. That sentiment has also been embodied in Zimbabwe's new cricketing folk hero: Raza.

"It's true that there was a possibility of me not playing the game again," he says. "I remember speaking to the surgeon before my second surgery, and I said God forbid if it is cancer, what are the possibilities? And he said because it's bone marrow, the chemo wouldn't work and we'd have to amputate your arm. Here I am. What do I have to complain about? What more can I say, man? People ask me, 'What is the reason?' *That* is the reason. Why am I doing well? Because I'm grateful to be alive. To be among my family, still representing my country. I just put a smile on my face and I try to do my best."

Recently, Raza's best has been very, very good indeed. Nominated for a slew of awards in 2022, he has also become the first Zimbabwean in almost a decade to secure an IPL contract. His journey to stardom all started with a note pinned on his wall. It was a daily reminder of a promise he made to himself, and it has borne bountiful reward.

"The process was to look at that wall every day, and speak to myself, be honest with myself, true to myself, give all I have. But if I had given all I have, and my ranking hadn't improved, I'd still be at peace."

Raza's remarkable rebound, not to mention the good vibes that are washing over Zimbabwean cricket at the moment, could well provide both an example and succour to another cricketer looking to make a comeback of a different sort. Gary Ballance, who last played for England more than five years ago, and appeared to have potentially played his last professional match after his central involvement in the Yorkshire racism scandal, has returned to Zimbabwe, where he was born, to reinvent himself within a team that has, despite a painful history, found a way to become a model for diversity and inclusion in cricket.

"Forget for a moment the fact that he's a really good player and that he's going to enhance Zimbabwe's cricket," suggests Houghton. "I'm just excited for him because he's been in a very, very dark place. Everything that happened in England has hit him really badly. Now he's come back here, and he's excited again about his cricket. Excited about getting on the park. And the boys love having him around, and he's already bringing great value."

All these journeys, all these stories, are threads in the tapestry of a team, a sport and a country that continues to defy and surprise. And the story, says Raza, is not over yet.

"It has been, Alhamdulillah, a remarkable journey, and what have I learned on the journey? Stay honest to your profession. Make the right sacrifices that this profession demands, and if you can carry on doing that, this profession definitely rewards you. Cricket will reward you back. All the things I've achieved, it's because of the prayers that I have from a lot of people all over the world, and staying true to this profession and playing this game with utmost honesty. Uphold the integrity of the game, and the game rewards you back."

Who could have predicted this: Raza and Ballance will find themselves on the field together soon. In the warm light of a Harare morning, perhaps, or the pastoral perfection of a sunset in Matabeleland, when the low sun beams through the reefed stratocumulus at the edge of a vast sky to become something almost solid, like gold, and everything it touches becomes like gold too, and the crowd is in song, and there's a game to be won.

There is much wrong with the world, but something unkillable persists. And in Zimbabwe, a cricket team is licking the salt from their wounds and turning to face the new day with that most powerful of feelings: hope.

KIPPAX
Nuii
ICE CREAM ADVENTURE
VIKINGS

LEFT: Gary Ballance returns to his homeland and straight into the national side

## Zimbabwe: A big 12 months

Zimbabwe's men's team will play six series across the next year, up to and including a meeting with Sri Lanka in January 2024. The country will also host the 2023 World Cup Qualifier in June, when the final two teams to feature in the 10-team showpiece tournament in India in October and November will be confirmed.

**January, 2023**
Ireland at home (3 T20Is, 3 ODIs)

**February**
West Indies at home (2 Tests)

**March**
Netherlands at home (3 ODIs)

**July**
Afghanistan away (2 Tests, 3 ODIs, 3 T20Is)

**December**
Ireland at home (1 Test, 3 ODIs, 3 T20Is)

**January, 2024**
Sri Lanka away (3 ODIs, 3 T20Is)

THE GREAT...

Nº5

# ENGLISH LEGGIES

In the fifth part of our series, Phil Walker recognises those hardy souls who have grappled with the game's most demanding job

PHIL WALKER
*Wisden Cricket Monthly* editor-in-chief
**@Phil_Wisden**

## Rehan Ahmed

Pakistan v England, Third Test
National Stadium, Karachi
December 19, 2022

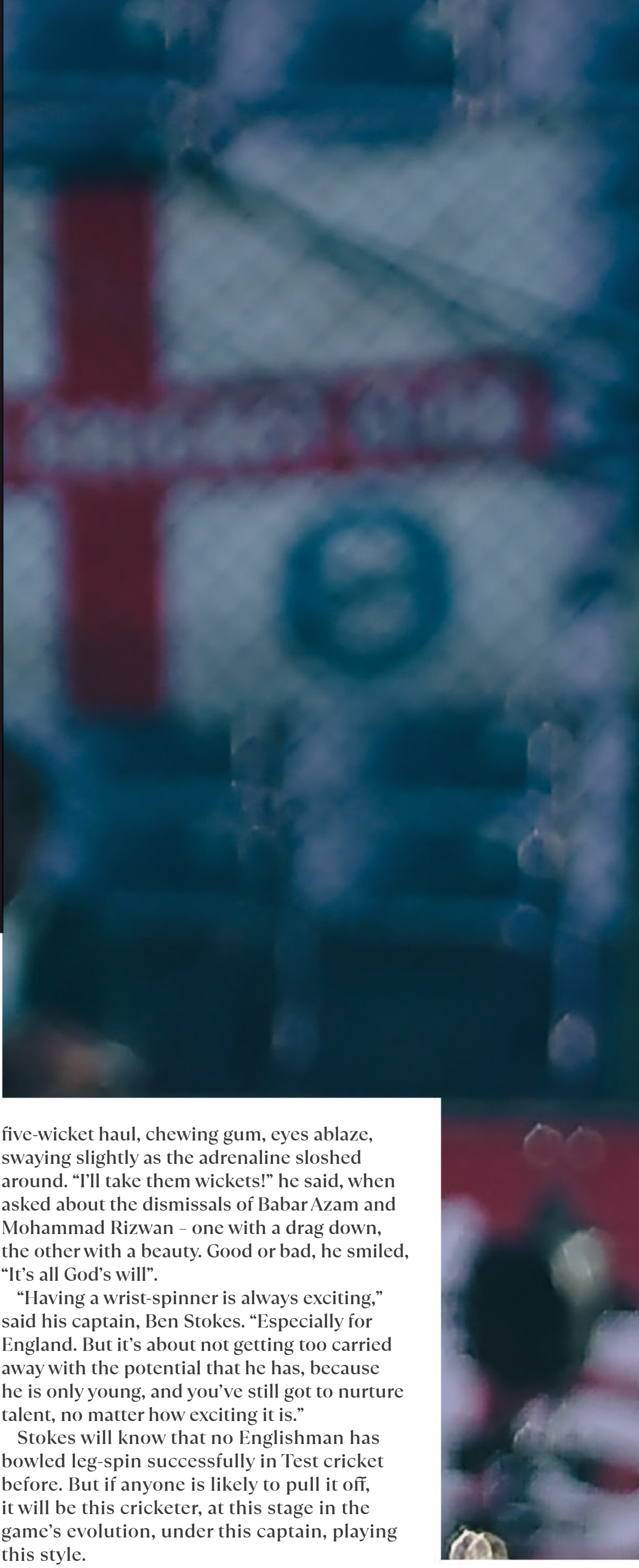


PHOTO BY RIZWAN TABASSUM

Last month Rehan Ahmed became England's youngest Test cricketer, the youngest boy in history to take five wickets on his Test debut, only the second English leg-spinner to take a Test five-for since 1959, and the latest teenager to make his dad cry on national TV.

The son of a jobbing quick from the Pakistani provinces, Ahmed was born in Nottingham on August 13, 2004. By 13 he was bowling at England players in the nets and getting them out; that same summer Shane Warne told him he'd be playing first-class cricket by 15. Warne was out by two years: in 2021, the same summer that he represented England under 19s, Ahmed made his senior debut for Leicestershire, the club he joined from Notts as a colt.

The Karachi Test was just his fourth first-class game. He gave an interview after his five-wicket haul, chewing gum, eyes ablaze, swaying slightly as the adrenaline sloshed around. "I'll take them wickets!" he said, when asked about the dismissals of Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan – one with a drag down, the other with a beauty. Good or bad, he smiled, "It's all God's will".

"Having a wrist-spinner is always exciting," said his captain, Ben Stokes. "Especially for England. But it's about not getting too carried away with the potential that he has, because he is only young, and you've still got to nurture talent, no matter how exciting it is."

Stokes will know that no Englishman has bowled leg-spin successfully in Test cricket before. But if anyone is likely to pull it off, it will be this cricketer, at this stage in the game's evolution, under this captain, playing this style.

THE GREAT...

## Bernard Bosanquet

Date and location unknown

PHOTO BY REINHOLD THIELE

The old Etonian amateur Bernard Bosanquet was a moderately useful medium pacer for Oxford University and Middlesex whose name would have sunk without trace if not for his extraordinary discovery one day in 1895 of a new way to spin a ball off a surface.

The orthodox leg-break, where the ball turns from right to left, or leg to off, was by then an established part of the game. But while playing a tabletop game with a tennis ball, Bosanquet found that by bending his wrist and flicking the ball out with his thumb and forefinger, it would instead spin in the other direction, from off to leg, as with a conventional off-break.

He worked in secret on his discovery at Oxford, mindful that the deception lay in the similarities in appearance between the two deliveries. He first released it in a match in 1900, but it wasn't until his successful first-class season in 1903 that the English game, and Plum Warner, the high priest of Lord's, began to pay attention. That winter, under Warner's captaincy, Bosanquet was selected to tour Australia with the MCC.

It was a gamble. Bosanquet was given to erratic, easily ridiculed spells. But Warner stuck with him, knowing that on the good days, when it was landing somewhere in the right vicinity, Bosanquet's new delivery would be unplayable. In his debut Test he removed the great Warwick Armstrong and Syd Gregory in the first innings, and challenged Victor Trumper in the second, as England marched to victory. After missing the second Test with a hand injury, he returned with seven wickets at Adelaide, bamboozling Australia's middle order to help England to an unassailable 3-0 lead. In all he took 16 wickets across four games.

"Bosanquet's value with the ball cannot be judged from the averages, as on his bad days he is, as everyone knows, one of the most expensive of living bowlers," *Wisden* wrote in its tour report. "When he was in form the Australians thought him far more difficult on hard wickets than any of the other bowlers, Clement Hill saying, without any qualification, that his presence in the eleven won the rubber."

It couldn't last. Batters began to get to grips with him, and Bosanquet, his secret out, played just three more Tests. But his mark on the game would be indelible, his delivery variously coming to be known as the 'Bosie', the 'wrong one' and of course by its most durable description: the googly. Aptly, the etymology of the 'googly' is itself a mystery.

## Eric Hollies

England v Australia, Fifth Test
The Oval
August 16, 1948

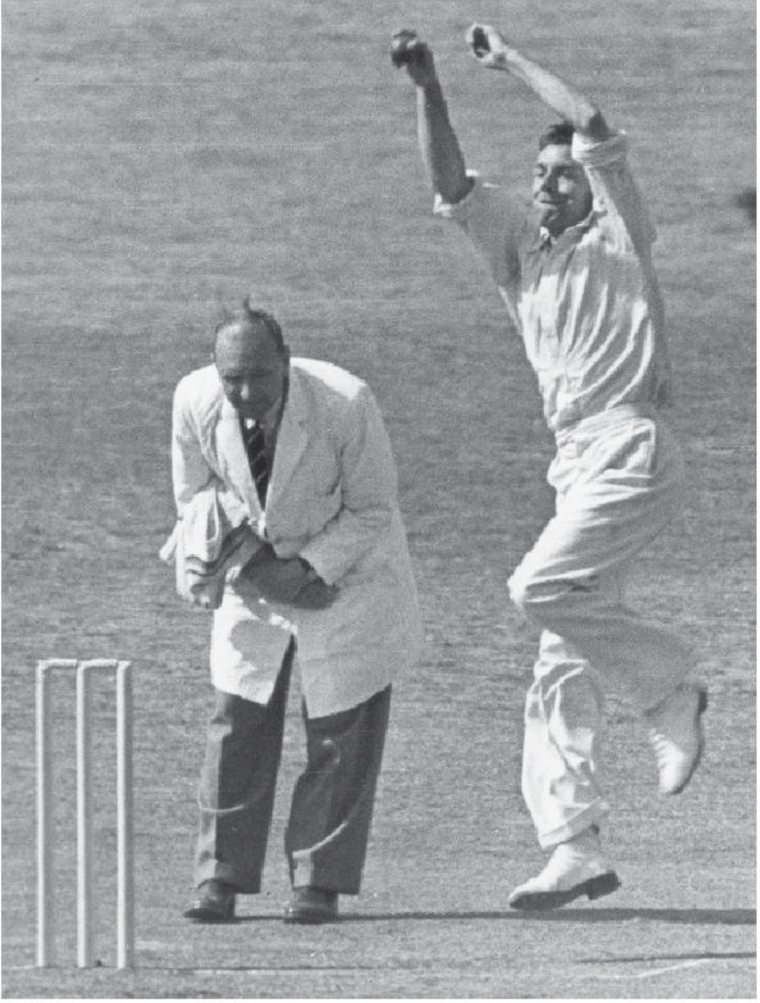
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

Smallish in stature yet stout of heart and immensely loved across three decades with Warwickshire, Eric Hollies was responsible for perhaps the most famous delivery in Ashes history.

Hollies was never an England regular. Like so many English spinners, his chances at Test level were sporadic, dependent on favourable conditions, and for much of the 1948 Ashes summer it was a familiar story. But in August when Australia came to Edgbaston for a tour match, an inspired eight-wicket haul, including that of Bradman, clean bowled, secured Hollies a recall for the final Test.

The Don's farewell summer had been an imperious procession, and he arrived at The Oval needing four runs from his final innings to secure an average of 100. Walking to the crease to a standing ovation, his first delivery from Hollies was dead-batted. The second was a perfectly pitched googly, to which Bradman prodded forward. The ball slipped between inside-edge and pad to dislodge his off bail. The crowd were stunned, slowly rising again to beckon him off for the final time.

While it was his fate to be associated with one delivery from the 130,625 he sent down in first-class cricket, "to remember Eric Hollies for that alone," wrote *Wisden* upon his death in 1981, "would be like seeing Chaplin as no more than a tramp who once made a dramatic meal of a boot". In all first-class cricket, Hollies took 2,323 wickets at 20.94, including 145 wickets in Warwickshire's title-winning season in 1951. He took over 100 wickets in a season 14 times.



## Doug Wright
July 1949

LOCATION AND PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

Doug Wright, a lifelong man of Kent who sustained the county's connection with leg-spin in the era after the retirement of the legendary 'Tich' Freeman, is still the only English leg-spinner to take 100 Test wickets. In 34 matches either side of World War II he claimed 108 scalps, with six five-wicket hauls and a single 10-wicket match, coming against South Africa at Lord's in 1947. He also took seven hat-tricks in a first-class career that spanned 25 years.

Wright never bowled a ball defensively, observed Colin Cowdrey, his teammate at Kent. Every ball, conceived from a bounding 15-yard run-up, a legacy of his early years as a seamer, was designed to take a wicket. On the good days he was an artist, with a spitting googly allied to a leg-break that would kick off a length and turn just enough, his skills surviving through an era that tended to distrust mystery spinners.

Much like with Freeman, who took 3,710 wickets for Kent from 580 games and who played alongside Wright in his latter years, to expect long-term accuracy, wrote David Frith, was to display a dismal ignorance of physics.

In Wright's obituary in the 1998 *Wisden Almanack*, Cowdrey recalls Wright being asked about the best over he ever bowled. "Bowling to the Don at Lord's, he said. 'Every ball came out of my hand the way I wanted and pitched where I wanted. I beat him twice. It went for 16'."

## Tommy Greenhough
England v India, Third Test
The Oval
August 1959

PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

Leggies are resilient, and Tommy Greenhough had to be more resilient than most. He was just 16 when he had his Lancashire contract cancelled after falling 40 feet in an industrial accident. The injuries to his wrists and ankles were so severe that a cricketing career seemed inconceivable, yet he recovered to play Test cricket.

Though his England career amounted to just four matches, he still left his imprint on the art form. Indeed, Greenhough's five-wicket haul in 1959 at Lord's against India was until last month the last time an English leggie had managed the feat in a Test match innings.

Much as with Hollies before him, Greenhough's misfortune was to be considered a luxury in an era of pragmatism, and though he claimed 735 wickets for Lancashire across 16 seasons, he was never fully appreciated for his skills and in particular his mastery of the googly.

THE GREAT...

# Ian Salisbury

Hove
March 31, 2022
PHOTO BY MIKE HEWITT

When Ian Salisbury made his Test debut at Lord's in 1992, ripping a beautiful leg-break across Javed Miandad, he became the first specialist leg-spinner to take a Test wicket for England since Robin Hobbs in 1968.

Predictably, the press swooned. "It was not so much a feather in a new cap," declared Scyld Berry, "as a head-dress to grace Hiawatha." He took five at Lord's; that summer only Courtney Walsh took more first-class wickets. *Wisden* duly made him one of their cricketers of the year, remarking that he was blessed with the requisite mix of optimism and realism of the kind "demanded of one who plies such a precarious trade".

In early 1993 he was taken to India but as a net bowler, and still ended up playing in the first Test. Mike Gatting grassed a catch off his bowling at silly-point that still must be seen to be believed. He struggled thereafter, which wasn't especially surprising considering he'd had only started bowling spin six years earlier.

For the sensitive Salisbury, unfairly maligned for not being Shane Warne, the international arena proved an unforgiving place. But at county level he was afforded the space to express himself, first at Sussex and then at Surrey, where he developed a lethal partnership with Saqlain Mushtaq, helping Surrey to three Championships. He took 884 first-class wickets in all, later becoming a specialist spin-bowling coach, and most recently the joint head coach at Sussex, a role he held until the back-end of last summer.

## Adil Rashid

Worcestershire v Yorkshire, County Championship
New Road, Worcester
April, 2008

PHOTO BY STU FORSTER

A double World Cup winner who performed beautifully in both tournaments and a symbol of the genius that lurks, ready to be nurtured, in every cranny of English life. He was born in Bradford to a cricket-mad father who converted the basement of the family home into a makeshift indoor net, from where Rashid could develop his gifts. A schoolboy phenomenon, he was just 18 when he made his Yorkshire debut, taking six second-innings wickets at Scarborough to lead them to victory over Derbyshire, and was soon being fast-tracked into the England set-up.

After a rocky start at international level, he found his rightful role as a middle-overs orchestrator in white-ball cricket. His immaculate control and burgeoning big-match temperament have underscored England's golden era as much as any other element. Despite playing just 19 Tests for 60 wickets – adding to his 262 scalps in limited-overs internationals – he is unquestionably the most complete English leg-spinner since the middle of last century.

## Sarah Glenn

England v India, Third T20I
Seat Unique Stadium, Bristol
September 15, 2022

PHOTO BY GARETH COPLEY

Sarah Glenn was first taken to Denby Cricket Club when she was a day old, her family popping in on their way back from the hospital. Glenn would grow up around the Derbyshire club, nurturing her skills with such precocity that she would be ready for international cricket by the age of 21. Even now she heads back there to play Saturday men's cricket – a form of the game that she loves and credits with aiding her development – when her other commitments allow.

The first specialist female leg-spinner to play for England this century, Glenn began her T20I career impressively, taking 15 wickets from her first 10 games at a notably low economy rate, and then building on those early showings across a breakout 2022 summer. With 48 wickets from 40 matches at an economy rate of just over six, Glenn now sits second behind Sophie Ecclestone in the ICC's T20I bowling rankings. The two will form a key partnership for England's tilt at the T20 World Cup in South Africa in February.

Next in our series on what it's like to be the parent of an international cricketer, John Hollioake, father of Adam and Ben, talks candidly to Jo Harman about a fairytale story with a tragic ending

# PROCREATION

## JOHN HOLLIOAKE, FATHER OF ADAM AND BEN

"Everything was a battle royal," says John Hollioake, recalling his two sons, Adam and Ben, going hell for leather at the family home in Melbourne. "They'd play every sport known to man. They used to fight like hell, even in the kitchen. They had the competitiveness I had in spades. I just wasn't bloody good enough to make the most of it."

Windows were broken, ornaments smashed, some of which John and his wife Daria have kept to this day as mementos of a time when their gifted young children were exploring how far their talent could take them.

By the summer of 1997 they would become the first pair of brothers to make their Test debuts together in the 20th century, representing England against the country of their birth. Adam was 25, Ben, at 19 years and 269 days, was England's youngest male Test cricketer since Brian Close in 1949, capping a landmark summer which saw him heralded as the new golden boy of English cricket.

It wasn't clear, however, that cricket would be their chosen path as they terrorised the family home as kids. Adam was a talented rugby and hockey player, while Ben excelled at pretty much any sport he turned his hand to. "Whether they were going to play cricket or not, I couldn't have told you," says John. "They could have played anything."

John's work as an engineer took him all over the world, and it was while living in Hong Kong that he first became aware of Adam's potential as a cricketer.

PHOTO BY CLIVE MASON

ABOVE: Ben and Adam on tour with England in the Caribbean in 1998

LEFT: John Hollioake with his sons Ben and Adam in 1978

"I'd given up cricket because I couldn't afford the time to play properly, the way I wanted to play, but when we got to Hong Kong I realised we weren't going to survive there without a club. I started doing a bit of coaching and I noticed Adam could play a bit. He had a beautiful bowling action. He used to bowl at me in the nets and he was a Mike Holding lookalike.

"Once he came over to me and said, 'I've been bowling at that boring old fart'. 'Which boring old fart?' He pointed him out. 'You mean Geoffrey Boycott?'. He said: 'Is that Geoffrey Boycott?! I've been bowling at him the whole session and he didn't hit me off the square.' Boycott was on his way to Sydney to play grade cricket. Adam was a good bowler at 12."

Ben, meanwhile, was wreaking havoc. When John's work took him from Hong Kong to the UK and then to Norway, he decided to enrol his youngest son as a boarder at Barrow Hills in Surrey. "I said I can't take this kid to Norway, he'll destroy something. Ben was a livewire. He was a completely different kettle of fish. In Hong Kong he got into trouble all over the place. He was a real handful and we left him in England.

"We'd only been in Norway about a week when we had a call saying Ben was in trouble. They said, 'Well, he's got a fantastic arm. He's just thrown a cricket ball through a stained glass window in the main hall, about 50 feet up'. I asked Ben what he did it for. He said there was a bird trapped in there and he wanted to free it."

When John was transferred to Sydney, nine-year-old Ben started to play his first organised cricket, taking 9-13 including a hat-trick in his first match for Gladesville. "This was an under-12s game," says John. "I didn't really have to do much with Ben in terms of coaching. He was a natural. As a batsman Adam wanted to be more correct. With Ben it was 'don't touch this', and the same with his bowling. Just let this kid go."

Adam had decided to stay in the UK when his family returned to Australia, continuing his education at St George's College and eventually earning a contract with Surrey in 1991. But with first-team opportunities hard to come by and his role unclear, the idea of being a professional cricketer didn't sit easily with him.

"Adam had a magnificent action until he joined Surrey," says John. "Geoff Arnold [Surrey's bowling coach] was a fantastic bowler, the type of bowler you'd love your kid to be. But Adam was never going to be a Geoff Arnold, a workhorse, and Geoff tried to make Adam a Geoff Arnold. He ended up getting stress fractures and Adam had to change his action completely. I have nothing against Geoff, but I regret not telling him to leave him alone. He had natural ability. Adam's batting fell away, too, and he had a bit of a battle to come back into things."

In 1992, while stationed in Libya, John received a call from Adam saying he was considering quitting

BELOW: Ben hits out on his ODI debut at Lord's in May 1997

cricket. "I thought he was going to give it away and I couldn't bear it. What the hell's the kid going to do? I said, 'I'm not going to let you give up, you've got a contract there'. He needed someone to tell him to get his act together. I wouldn't have done that in a million years with Ben. He could handle anything."

In June 1993, while travelling by boat from Libya to England, John flicked on the radio to hear how Adam had fared on his first-class debut. "I was listening to the news and they got to county cricket. Surrey versus Derbyshire, Adam Hollioake 123. What!? He'd come in at №7."

By the summer of 1995 Adam was deputising as captain in the absence of Alec Stewart, and the following season he was joined in the Surrey side by his younger brother, who had been fast-tracked into the first team after a handful of appearances for the second XI.

As Adam's career progressed at pace, Ben continued to track him. In August 1996, Adam made his ODI debut, taking 4-23 against Pakistan at Edgbaston and then 4-45 against the same opposition the following day at Trent Bridge. By May the next year, they were England teammates, Ben receiving a call-up for the ODI series against Australia despite having only made five first-class appearances. Even his older brother wasn't convinced he was ready for the step up.

"David Graveney [England's chairman of selectors] rang me and said, 'We're going to pick your brother, what do you think? Is he ready?'" Adam tells WCM. "And I was like, 'I don't think so, but with him you never know', because that's the way he was. I knew he was going to be good enough, but I didn't think he had much behind him to recover if things went wrong. They picked him but I didn't think they were going to play him. Then when we won the series after two games, they decided to put him in at №3 at Lord's, almost in a pinch-hitting role."

> **“Adam acts the tough nut, but inside there's a gentle soul. I think that's why he was a good captain – he takes pride in the way he treats people, and I'm proud of him for that. Ben was tough as nails, and you never knew it because he'd just give you a grin**
> **John Hollioake**

Six overs into England's reply to Australia's 269, Ben walked out to the middle. His third delivery went straight back past Glenn McGrath before the bowler could react. He swept Shane Warne for six, languidly deposited McGrath over his head for another boundary and brought up his half-century – only the second of his professional career – at better than a run-a-ball. When he departed for a 48-ball 63, the Lord's crowd rose to acknowledge the arrival of a new star.

"I put it up there with my favourite moments in my career," says Adam. "I didn't come out on the balcony when he first went out to bat because I was nervous, I just didn't want him to get out for a duck. I still wasn't sure if he was ready. But then he started opening up and when he got to about 20 I thought, 'Well, even if he gets out now, he's done more than anyone could have expected at his age'. To be able to sit there and enjoy the next 40 runs of carnage was just awesome.

"I was gobsmacked, in awe of how unfazed by the situation he was. He was batting as if it was me and him having a game in the backyard. It just so

TRENT BRIDGE
CITROEN
Laird
KEYWORTH
MATRIXGRADE
Welcome to Rushcliffe - of Trent Bridge
ROVER

PHOTO BY ADRIAN MURRELL

ABOVE: Adam and Ben receive their Test caps from Mike Atherton at Trent Bridge in August 1997

happened to be against two of the best bowlers of all-time. I knew he could play but I'd be lying if I said I thought a 19-year-old could ever do that to Warne and McGrath. As for Ben, I don't think anything took him by surprise."

Seven weeks later the Hollioakes were back at Lord's, Adam captaining Surrey to victory over Kent in the Benson & Hedges Cup final and Ben picking up the Player of the Match award for an effortless 98 from 112 balls. Adam dedicated the win to Graham Kersey, Surrey's young wicketkeeper who had died in a car crash in Australia earlier that year.

"It might be just because we enjoyed the summer so much," recalls Adam, "but it seemed like every day was sunny. My brother doing so well in those two Lord's games will stick with me forever."

By early August, the brothers were Test cricketers, receiving their caps from Mike Atherton on the Trent Bridge outfield ahead of the fifth Ashes Test. John was there to witness the moment. "I was watching Atherton give Adam and Ben their caps, and he pointed me out in the crowd. Imagine that – the captain of England pointing out a parent in the stand. That was one of the biggest thrills of my life."

Adam's time in the Test side was brief but he built a reputation as one of the game's most innovative and aggressive captains, leading Surrey to three Championship titles, five limited-overs trophies and being named England's ODI skipper, guiding his country to Champions Trophy glory in Sharjah in December 1997.

Ben's progress was less smooth after his breakthrough summer. He struggled for runs at county level and appeared only fleetingly for England, playing his second and final Test match against Sri Lanka in 1998.

"Everyone knew how good he was, you don't just lose that," says Adam. "But there was a feeling that he had to learn the game, to learn the discipline of being a professional cricketer every day, those lessons that most people when they get picked to play for England have learnt already. I felt like he'd done that when he got picked again [for the ODI team in 2001] and he was just starting to show that, on top of his obvious talent, he was becoming a professional who could turn in those performances every day."

Tragically, Ben never had the opportunity to fulfil his potential. On March 23, 2002, driving home from a dinner with his family, at the end of a winter spent touring with England, his Porsche 924 came off a ramp on a Perth expressway and hit a brick wall. Aged 24 and 132 days, no England Test cricketer has died so young.

"I have thousands of videos of Ben, but I hardly watch them," says John. "My wife watches them all the time but I can't do it. When Ben first passed away, I used to dream every night about his life until the point when he died. Then one night I went to the tree

Subscribe today and save **50%**

EDITED BY LAWRENCE BOOTH
WISDEN
CRICKETERS' ALMANACK
2022

**Subscription is £28.50 and apart from giving you our best price promise it also entitles you to discount codes to redeem with *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, *The Nightwatchman*, a** site-wide discount on Bloomsbury and *Wisden* books and (new for 2022) a discount offer on *Wisden* branded beer.

**www.wisdenalmanack.com/subscribe**

PHOTO BY JOHN HOLLIOAKE

ABOVE: Ben and Adam with their sister Eboni and mother Daria in Hunters Hill, Sydney in 1986

where his memorial is and Ben said to me, 'Dad, time to move on, let me go'. I've never had a dream like that since, but I still haven't let him go.

"We've still got his ashes. If we do throw them it will be at The Oval, they're not going anywhere else, but I can't do it. I said to Daria the other day, 'Are we holding him up?'. She can't let go either."

Adam continued to captain Surrey after his brother's death but never felt the same spark on the cricket field. He retired from the game in 2004 – making a brief return with Essex in 2007 – and has since tried his hand at boxing, MMA cage fighting and filled a variety of coaching roles in cricket.

"Adam's done lots of bits and pieces since retiring but never really gone through with anything," says John. "I maybe put it down to Ben's passing. The way he reacted to Ben's death is indicative of how impulsive he is. He played a wonderful innings in one of his last games but he said it wasn't him batting out there. At the end of his career I think he felt he was letting people down because his captaincy was waning and he wasn't enjoying himself. He told me that every time he threw the ball to second slip or gully he thought of Ben, and it was too much for him.

"Everyone takes Adam as a hard customer, and he comes across that way, but inside there's a gentle soul. I think that's why he was a good captain – he takes pride in the way he treats people, and I'm proud of him for that. He acts the tough nut, with his boxing and that sort of stuff, but he's not underneath, I don't think. Ben was tough as nails, and you never knew it because he'd just give you a grin. With Adam it ate away, and I'm pretty sure it's eating away now."

Whether Ben would have been able to consistently produce the type of performances he gave the world a tantalising glimpse of is one of English cricket's great 'what ifs'. His overall career record is modest, but, even before his death, there was the sense that he was the type of mercurial player who would be remembered for moments rather than statistics, like that summer's day at Lord's in 1997 when he treated facing McGrath and Warne like a game of backyard cricket with his brother.

"If there was nothing on the game, you might not see Ben," says John. "'Where's Ben gone? Not in the room. He was so laidback and nothing ever worried him – he played innings where people were frustrated like hell with him. But you just had to know the kid. It took a lot to get him up. With Ben you knew that if there was something on the game, there was no way he was going to let you down. I was proud of that."

PHOTO BY ST ORSTER

## A CRICKET LIFE

# CRAIG WHITE

The England and Yorkshire all-rounder on his unusual path to bowling fast, cleaning up Lara for a golden duck at The Oval, and the blackout in Scarborough which changed his whole outlook on life

**Interview** **Jo Harman**

> **I blacked out in the street in Scarborough. I had brain scans, an ECG, and for three weeks I wasn't allowed to do anything until the results came back. It was mental torture**

LEFT: Sending Brian Lara on his way for a golden duck at The Oval in 2000

BELOW: White was a late convert to fast bowling

### Making waves Down Under

Mum and Dad decided to emigrate to Australia from Yorkshire when I was seven, in 1977. We lived in Kennington, a suburb of Bendigo about 100 miles north of Melbourne. It was a big country town and I had a great childhood. I was just outside all the time playing sport. There were cricket nets in every park which everyone could use. I managed to break into the Victoria under-17 and under-19 teams, and then I made the Australian under-19 squad. I got asked to go to the cricket academy in Adelaide and I thought, 'I've got a chance here'. There were so many better cricketers than me on the academy but I worked really hard and saw it as a massive opportunity.

### Giving up the gloves

I could always bat and back then I kept wicket. I was the Victoria under-17 and under-19 wicketkeeper but Darren Berry was also from Victoria and he was brilliant. He was always going to keep wicket for Victoria and there wasn't a great opportunity for me. I just started bowling some spin in the nets at the academy and Ashley Mallett, our spin coach, said I should seriously think about taking it up, so I did. When I came over to England in 1990 I was an off-spinning all-rounder.

### Homeward bound

Our head coach at the academy in Adelaide was Jack Potter, who toured England with Australia in the 60s and got to know Bob Appleyard, who was on the Yorkshire committee. Jack wrote to Bob and said they had this Yorkshire-born Australian who's doing pretty good, and suggested he have a look at him. They flew me over and I was going to join the Yorkshire academy for a year but I played in a 'Probables' versus 'Possibles' game and I got a few runs and took a few wickets and that was it, I was straight in the first team and signed a contract. For a couple of years I was playing here in the English summer and then heading back to Australia for the winter but I ended up meeting a girl in Scarborough, got married, and decided to settle here and play for Yorkshire.

### Finding an identity

Because I hadn't played senior international cricket for Australia, I wasn't classed as overseas. Everyone thought I was, but I wasn't. I had to make it pretty clear that I was born in Yorkshire! I was a bit of a novelty back then, as an 'overseas' player, but I was accepted pretty well. The Yorkshire public love their cricket and if you do well for them they love you, and if you don't they boo you off! Jeremy Batty was probably the number one spinner at Yorkshire, and we had Phil Carrick who bowled left-arm spin, and one of the coaches said they didn't see any opportunity for me to break through as an off-spinner, so I started bowling seamers and I was doing people for a bit of pace. Every now and again in a first-class game if nothing was happening, Martyn Moxon would throw me the ball and say, "There you go, Chalks, run in and bowl as quick as you can for two overs and see what happens". I started picking up the odd wicket and then all of a sudden I was the fourth seamer and bowling 15 overs a game. It just built up.

### Premature selection

I didn't feel ready for Test cricket at all when I made my debut against New Zealand in 1994. I'd only been bowling quick for about 18 months, and I still believe now that if I'd been given another year, maybe 18 months, to learn my trade, get a bit stronger, get some overs under my belt, I reckon I would've played a lot more

consistently early on in my England career. Instead of just coming in for two or three Tests and getting dropped or injured. I was aware of accusations of favouritism because [former Yorkshire captain] Ray Illingworth was selector, and Athers [Mike Atherton, England captain] made it very clear that he didn't want me in the team. It wasn't a great environment back then. It was very much 11 individuals trying to do well to get picked for the next match and get their appearance fee. When I did play, Athers would give me the ball when it was 40 or 50 overs old, and say, "There you go, try and get out Brian Lara out", who'd be on 102 or something. Later, Athers and Illy sat me down and gave me a clear role, to just run in and bowl as fast as I could for four- or five-over spells. Clarity in my role made me feel a little bit more comfortable but I kept getting injured and I was in and out.

## Start me up

I'll never forget my second Test. We knew that Mick Jagger and Eric Clapton were in one of the Lord's boxes. I'm a massive music fan and Clapton was one of my heroes. I'd reached my fifty and I looked up at the box and there's Jagger and Clapton stood up clapping *me*. It was a real out-of-body experience. They're my heroes and they're clapping me. That's probably why I was a little bit distracted and got run out the next over! It was a direct hit from Dion Nash from wide fine-leg and I think I was one of the first players to be given out by TV replay. I honestly thought I was past the stumps but the replay showed I was out by about half an inch.

BELOW: White takes out Merv Hughes' middle stump in a B&H World Series match at the MCG in 1994

HUGHES
WORLD SERIES

## Emerging from the darkness

In 2000, two things helped me along the way. I was one of the first 11 lads to get an England central contract and straightaway that made me feel wanted. You knew if you were fit and doing well, you were going to play, and they could monitor your workload if you had a Test match coming up. That was great for my recovery. And then in May, I blacked out in the street in Scarborough. I had brain scans, an ECG, and for three weeks I wasn't allowed to do anything until the results came back. It was mental torture. I was like, 'Shit, I could be a goner here, I could be on my last legs'. When the results came back the doctor said they couldn't find anything and I should crack on with my life. It was like I had a second chance. It gave me a different outlook on life, basically. I had been my own worst enemy as a player. If I didn't do well I beat myself up and would sometimes get in a downward spiral. After getting the all-clear I thought: 'Right, I'm just going to do the best I can. If I don't do well, it's no biggie, I'll try again next time.' That massively changed the way I performed. I was more carefree.

## Lara's golden duck

I remember seeing Brian Lara in London probably five days before the first Test against the West Indies in 2000. I was in a nightclub with Goughie [Darren Gough] and Lara was there with Dwight Yorke. He laughed at me as if to say, 'You're never going to get me out'. I think he even said those words: 'You'll never get me out'. At Headingley [where White dismissed Lara lbw for 4], I got a few left-handers out from round the wicket, taking the ball away. To nullify that, Lara took an off-stump guard and Duncan [Fletcher, England coach] noticed that he'd had his leg stump knocked out a couple of times in the nets, so when he came in [at The Oval], Nasser [Hussain, England captain] said, "Just go for his leg peg". I meant to bowl a yorker but it was probably a long half-volley, really. As soon as I let go of it I thought, 'Oh no, that's four', but he was so far across that he was nowhere near it. He exposed his leg stump and we all know what happened next [Lara was dismissed for the first golden duck of his Test career]. I remember being on the balcony at The Oval after we'd won the series and there were about 25,000 people on the ground. We came out with a bottle of champagne each and I felt like a rockstar. We felt more of a team when we had those central contracts and I knew Nasser rated me and wanted me in the team. That was the first time I felt like that playing for England.

## Dancing in the dark

The win in Pakistan in 2000 was a great series. At Karachi [where England won by six wickets to take the series] I was due in next, and it was unbelievably dark. I had my helmet and gloves on ready to run out there and I couldn't see where the ball was. Thorpey [Graham Thorpe] or Nasser would play a shot and you'd be looking for the fielder running after the ball to see where it had gone. My reverse-swing came in useful on that tour. My action was naturally

## Factfile

**BORN:** December 16, 1969, Morley Hall, Yorkshire
**MAJOR TEAMS:** England, Central Districts, Victoria, Yorkshire
**CAREER:**
30 Tests, 1,052 runs at 24.46, 1 hundred, 5 fifties, HS 121; 59 wickets at 37.62, 3 five-wicket hauls, BBI 5-32
51 ODIs, 568 runs at 15.77, 1 fifty, HS 57*; 65 wickets at 26.55, 1 five-wicket haul, BB 5-21
276 first-class matches, 12,395 runs at 32.53, 21 hundreds, 62 fifties, HS 186; 395 wickets at 28.50, 11 five-wicket hauls, BBI 8-55
362 List-A matches, 7,317 runs at 26.51, 5 hundreds, 30 fifties, HS 148; 337 wickets at 25.10, 3 five-wicket hauls, BB 5-19
33 T20s, 570 runs at 18.38, 2 fifties, HS 55; 2 wickets at 66.00, BB 1-0

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- ✓ Took 13 wickets at 18.15 in England's landmark 2000 Test series win against West Indies
- ✓ A key member of the England side which won Test series in Pakistan in 2000 and Sri Lanka in 2001
- ✓ Named Player of the Match at Ahmedabad in 2001 after scoring 121, his first and only Test hundred
- ✓ Won the County Championship title with Yorkshire in 2001 and the C&G Trophy the following season

ABOVE: Taking the plaudits at Headingley in 2000 after claiming his maiden Test five-for

made for it. I found it quite hard to swing the ball out. I could do it if I slowed down and just tried to bowl medium and get my wrist behind the ball, but as soon as I tried to bowl flat out, I went the other side of the ball and the wrist dropped a bit, which is perfect for reverse swing. If it was swinging, it would go quite big and quite late.

### The Test ton

I enjoyed the challenge of facing spin in Asia, and I think possibly what helped me was that growing up in Australia, every team would have a leg-spinner, so you got used to picking it. It was very hot at Ahmedabad [in 2001, when White scored his solitary Test hundred] and I remember it turned but not massive turn. It was the bounce that was hard to get used to, but I could read Kumble, and I could read Harbhajan as well, so that was a massive help. I had a game plan that if it was in my area I would try to hit a boundary, and if not I'd block it or try to get a single. It was very simple.

### Ashes and out

I got 80-odd and three-for at the MCG [in 2002] and that turned out to be my final Test match. I had a little side strain so I was rested for the Sydney Test to get fit for the World Cup, which I managed to do, but I was still sore and I was getting an injection into my ribs five minutes before we went out to bowl. I couldn't really practise because I was so sore. I went home and had an operation and they found a three or four centimetre bone spur, a calcium growth, on my rib, which had probably been the cause of all the pain, hitting my pelvis every time I bowled a ball. They went in and took a little bit of my rib out and took the bone spur off but unfortunately it didn't work. I never really bowled after that and played for Yorkshire as a batter for five or six years. I had a gift to bowl fast, I had a quick arm, but my bowling muscles weren't developed from a young age and I just kept breaking down.

### A proud Tyke

My father was a very proud Yorkshireman and loved his cricket. He always used to say that if I got good, he was going to take me back to Yorkshire for trials. Winning the County Championship with them in 2001 was huge. I made some great friendships playing for Yorkshire for 17 or 18 seasons. It was a real honour to captain them, but I wasn't a natural leader. I'm more of a foot soldier. I tried it but it probably didn't suit my personality.

### Moving into coaching

Coaching felt a natural transition. I did a little bit at Yorkshire after retiring and then moved down south to Hampshire. It's a great club with great people and we had a bit of success in my three years as head coach. We won the Royal London in my final year and then I just decided it was time to come home. I didn't have a role to go into but I got offered the chance to help Paul Shaw at Lancashire Thunder, the women's team, and that's what I'm doing currently, and a little bit with the Lancashire men as well. I'm freelance at the moment but there are some contracted roles coming up shortly which I'll be applying for. We'll wait and see. ■

**HOW TO...**

# Be a commentator

James Wallace learns more about the art of commentary from the best in their field

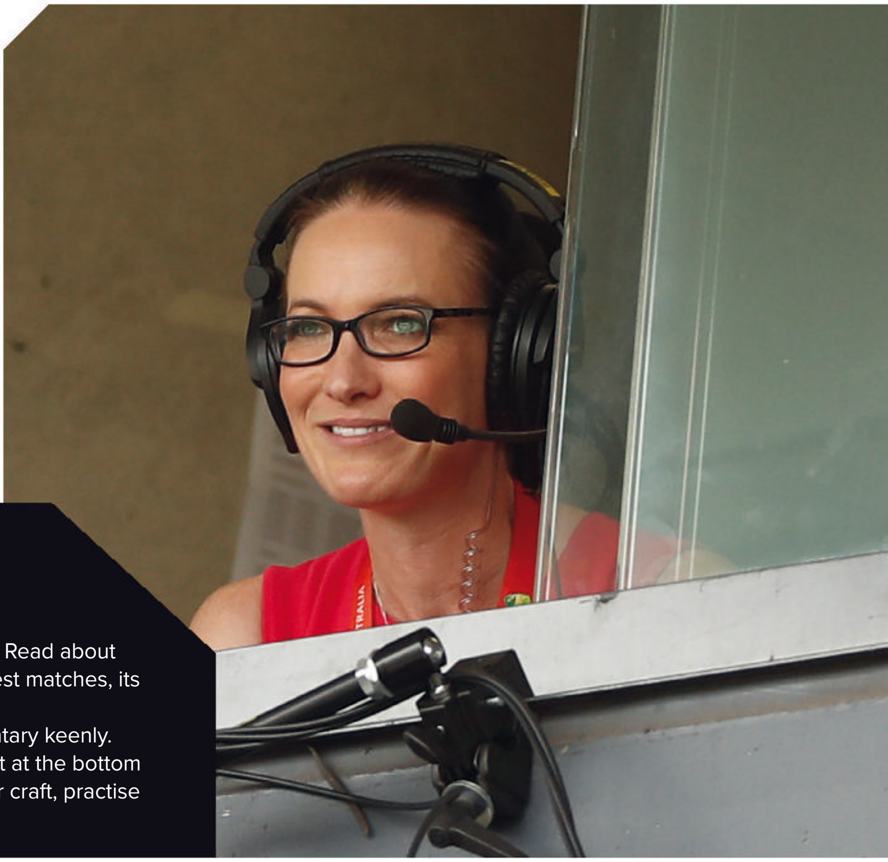
What is cricket commentary? Simply put, it's a description of the action – on radio this is done by a ball-by-ball commentator, but we all know it's so much more besides. It's analysis too, a summariser taking the reins from the ball-by baller to give an overview of the game situation or drill into a particular topic. Commentary encompasses in-depth discussion and debate, and the very best elevate it to an art form.

"Cricket commentary is so different from other sports like football and rugby where the commentary tends to be purely descriptive because those games go by at a helter-skelter pace," says Daniel Norcross, the *Test Match Special* commentator. "They aren't really discursive in the way that radio cricket commentary is. TV cricket commentary can be absolutely brilliant but they have pictures to give a deeper understanding of the game. On the radio, the commentators are that camera.

"A cricket radio broadcast for a Test match has more in common with a 'through the night' radio show. The audience want so many diverse things from the game. They will let you know if you don't mention the score, or if you go too far off topic. But then lots of people listen to it because of the characters and the camaraderie. The commentators have become like friends – they've listened to Jonathan Agnew, say, for 30 years and they know all about his dogs and his penchant for flying, BBQs and double entendre.

"Cricket commentary has a way of getting into your system. This is going to sound terribly pretentious, but if you read poetry aloud, Homer especially, you have these rhythmic utterances that are similar to cricket. 'Here's Broad, tall, blond, running away from the top of his mark, right arm over the wicket to the left-handed Warner...' You have a rhythm and a cadence in your head which you develop."

BELOW: Alison Mitchell was the first woman to become a regular commentator on *Test Match Special*



**HOW TO GET STARTED**

## Alison Mitchell

### Journalist and sports commentator

"It sounds obvious but consume as much cricket as you can. Read about the game's past, its personalities, its controversies, its greatest matches, its administration. Absorb and acquire a depth of knowledge.

"Listen to radio commentary and watch television commentary keenly. Notice the differences between the two. Be prepared to start at the bottom and work your way up. It's invaluable to be able to learn your craft, practise it, make mistakes and improve away from the spotlight."

### HOW TO GET STARTED

## Melissa Story

### BBC Solent and *Test Match Special* commentator

"If that first breakthrough hasn't happened yet then it's worth reaching out to broadcasters on social media and asking for their advice as, in my experience, plenty are willing to help.

"Listen to yourself commentate. It was my idea of hell, but you notice a lot when you put yourself in the place of your audience. Don't change your personality or try to mimic someone else. Your originality and passion will allow you stand out so if you get that first opening, jam your foot in the door and seize the opportunity."

### Putting up the scaffolding

"A radio summariser and a TV commentor aren't hugely different," adds Norcross. "They comment on the stuff that has already been seen, it's just that on the radio it has been 'seen' by the words of the ball-by-ball commentator. The ball-by-ball commentator does a lot of the heavy lifting and they often describe a lot of the action by vocal cadence. The listener can often tell by the vocal inflections whether there's been a wicket or runs. It's like creating a wall of noise from which the listener can often infer what's going on.

"There's a scaffolding to radio commentary. We all try to take control of the ball when the bowler is at the top of their mark. In an ideal world, every ball-by ball commentator wants to have a few seconds of build-up – they need to be able to describe the field settings once an over at least, so the listener has the imprint in their mind. You need to create these building blocks. Another one is keeping the score updated regularly. Around that you can then build your own style."

> **The listener can often tell by the vocal inflections whether there's been a wicket or runs. It's like creating a wall of noise from which the listener can often infer what's going on**
>
> Daniel Norcross, *Test Match Special* commentator

### The skill of summarising

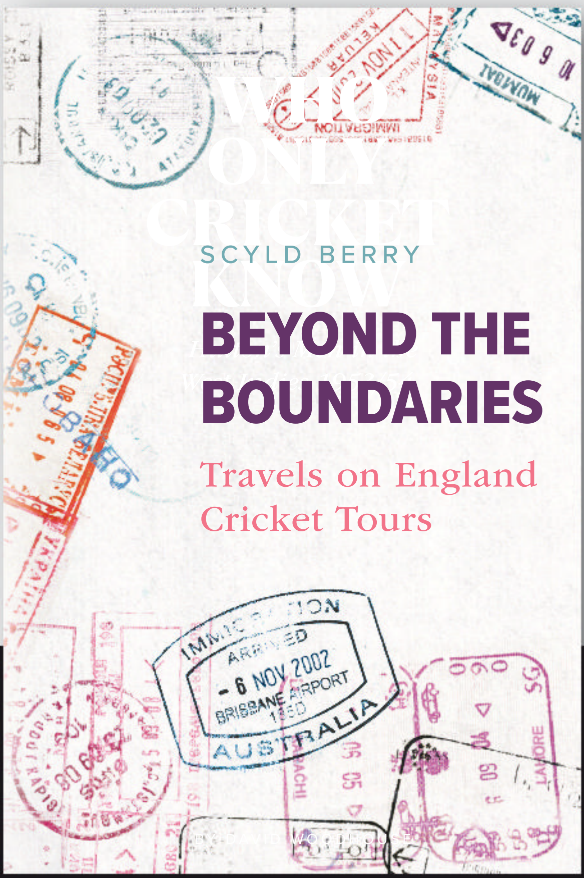
Norcross describes Jeremy Coney, the former New Zealand captain and now a TMS colleague, as a huge influence on his career. "Jeremy is so good that he makes us ball-by-ballers sound better. He has a care for words and how to use them. He uses tone, which is a genuine art, masterfully. He's firm but generous, and always inquisitive."

"As the summariser, you notice things in the course of the over," Coney tells WCM. "Changes in the field, in a delivery stride – minutiae, but you have to watch. You can't fit it all in between balls, you need to be able to pick it up and let it go. Your story might start in June and still be going in August...

"Commentary has changed dramatically but it's a case of adapting to suit the style. You shouldn't just meander, although it can be easy to do. You need to make points. If people choose to run with it or ignore it, which sometimes is the case, then that's their prerogative. I don't mind as long as I've got my point through." ■

ABOVE: Daniel Norcross with fellow commentator Ebony Rainford-Brent

LEFT: The incomparable Jeremy Coney


SCYLD BERRY
BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES
Travels on England Cricket Tours

# BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

### *Travels on England Cricket Tours*

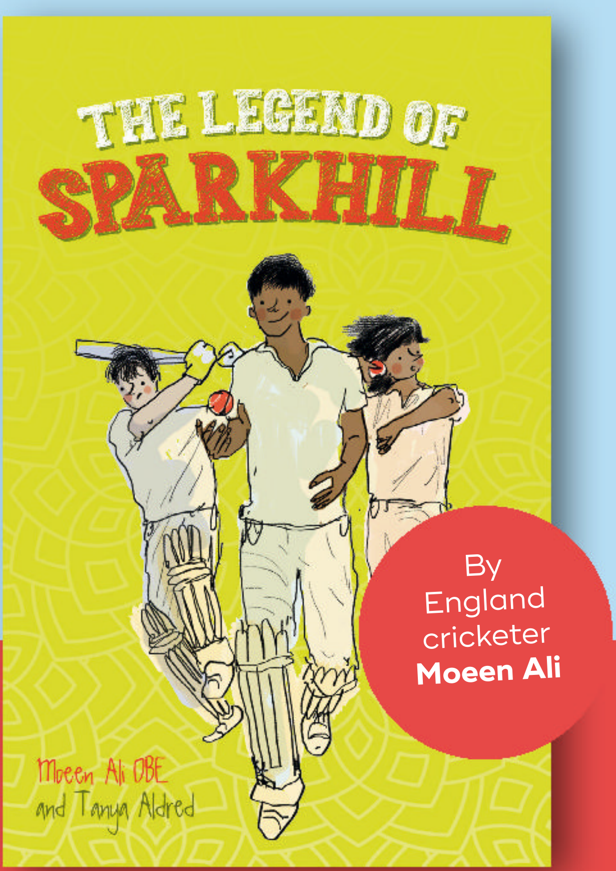
By Scyld Berry

SPORTS BOOK AWARDS 2022
THE SUNDAY TIMES
SHORTLISTED

Scyld Berry has been covering England cricket tours since 1977, watching nearly 500 Tests. Here, he takes us deep into the heart of each of the nine Test playing nations he has visited, recounting tales of tours gone by.

Order now quoting offer code **FIELD2022** to get £3 off
THENIGHTWATCHMAN.NET
0203 696 5730 (9AM-5PM MON-FRI)
HARDBACK ~~£19~~ **£16 + P&P** E-BOOK ~~£9.50~~ **£6.50**

---


THE LEGEND OF SPARKHILL
Moeen Ali OBE
and Tanya Aldred
By England cricketer Moeen Ali

# THE LEGEND OF SPARKHILL

By Moeen Ali

12-year-old Birmingham schoolkid, Mo Akeel, lives for cricket. Along with his mates, his club manages to beat the odds and make the final, but practice clashes with prayer at the mosque on a Friday night. So Mo has to take drastic action to fulfil his destiny.

Told with real passion and skill, this story will be an inspiration for a generation of young schoolchildren.

Order now quoting offer code **SPARK2022** to get £2 off
THENIGHTWATCHMAN.NET
0203 696 5730 (9AM-5PM MON-FRI)
**~~£7.99~~ £5.99 + P&P**

# HOTBEDS

## No.1 BIRMINGHAM & DISTRICT

In the first of a new series on the club game's most fertile regions, Scott Oliver explores the past and present of the world's oldest cricket league

SCOTT OLIVER

**Freelance sportswriter and stalwart club cricketer**

**@reverse_ sweeper**

By the time the suited gentlemen had shuffled out of the Queen's Arms Hotel on Easy Row and into the cold Birmingham night of December 14, 1888, the world's first cricket league had been established. 110 years later, the Birmingham & District Cricket League became, for better or for worse, the country's first ECB Premier League, the canary down the mine.

At times during its 134-year existence, it has been undeniably the strongest in the land, its representative XI enjoying regular success in the League Cricket Conference President's Trophy, its clubs dominating the national knockout. There was a large local population to draw on, close relations with Warwickshire and Worcestershire – indeed, both counties have entered their second XIs into the competition – and, in later years, a smattering of overseas stars to beef out the quality provided by a raft of current, former or future full-time pros and the gnarly clubbies who had to be streetwise to survive in such company. Steve Waugh, Wasim Akram, Allan Donald and Kevin Pietersen have graced these fields. England players from SF Barnes via Dennis Amiss to Ian Bell, Chris Woakes and Moeen Ali have come through these clubs.

The only thing that's permanent is change, however, and when Walsall were relegated last September from the recently (re-)streamlined two-divisional BDPCL structure, only one of its founding members remained – West Bromwich Dartmouth (WBD), now in the second tier – or two if you include Moseley, which subsumed King's Heath in the league's early life. With 53 titles between them – 18 for Moseley and Walsall, 17 for WBD – they are comfortably the league's most historically successful teams. One of them falling through the trapdoor has been seismic.

All three grandees trod the Lord's turf during the league's two-decade supremacy in the National Club Championship, when it provided eight winners and three runners-up through the 1980s and 90s (nine and four if you include clubs that would later join). Moseley won it in 1980, Walsall in 1996, having lost to Teddington five years earlier, while WBD were defeated in an all-Brum final in 1993 by Old Hill, winners in 1984, '85 and '87 before themselves losing to Teddington

PHOTO COURTESY OF KCC

RIGHT: Kidderminster's first XI in 1984, with Graeme Hick (back row, far right), who amassed the fourth-highest aggregate for a BDCL season in the league's history

in 1991. Stourbridge triumphed in 1986, and Wolverhampton in 1990 – just their second season of BDCL membership – having been beaten finalists two years earlier and winners in 1973. It is the source of much local pride.

Since then, however, there have 'only' been three final appearances, and one win: Shrewsbury repeating their 1983 success as a Shropshire League club with victory in 2011. Add these slimmer pickings to the hard times endured by some of its historic, heavyweight clubs – both Stourbridge and Old Hill have also dropped out – and there has been much introspective debate over whether the league is in decline, and if so, why. It is an archetypal story of embattled old powers and thrusting newcomers – perhaps also of wider socioeconomic forces and an ever-changing cricketing landscape, locally and further afield.

For many who played in the 'golden era', the key event is the inception of the Premier League in 1998. A closed-shop structure – 10 teams between 1920 and 1975, a dozen thereafter – expanded overnight to two divisions and eventually four, plugging itself into the county leagues of Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire and South Staffordshire, which became feeders. The waning performance on the national stage is, for some, a direct result of this *perestroika*.

"All leagues are weaker since promotion and relegation," says Dean Headley, the former England seamer who played alongside his father Ron in Old Hill's 1987 national knockout win. "The old system was an elite 12-club, 36-team premium product drawing in the best players from all over the Midlands. Those players are now spread over too many clubs, chasing fool's gold. Talent pooling has disappeared. It has become more about winning, or not getting relegated, than development."

Ambitious clubs spending money to bootstrap themselves into the Promised Land; anxiety-wracked establishment clubs over-spending to keep up. These are familiar themes, and although the genie cannot be put back in the bottle, Headley's argument for a closed system of 'institutional stability, individual mobility' will doubtless sound less meritocratic than aristocratic to clubs outside looking in, a perpetual status quo. Why develop youngsters if the best will inevitably be spirited away? Why put in the volunteer hours for a club trapped under a glass ceiling (or at best maxing out on continued dominance of a county league)? Don't fixed elites breed complacency?

At which point it is instructive to note that Old Hill – the national knockout's second most successful club, with as many wins as Birmingham League titles – were latecomers to the traditional elite, the last at the top table, arriving in 1920 when founding member Handsworth Wood had their ground sold from under them. Right place, right time. A happy historical accident.

Clubs' fortunes rise and fall – literally in the case of Dudley, which folded when a mineshaft under the ground collapsed in 1985, opening the door to Coventry and North Warwickshire, the club at which Ian Bell first unfurled that famous cover drive. Indeed, only four founding clubs – those three grandees and Aston Unity – made it through to 1920 and that 55-year unbroken cast list.

Dudley were one of five that drifted in through the 1890s, along with Smethwick, Stourbridge, Kidderminster – for whom a young Graeme Hick would amass 1,234 runs in 1984, the fourth-highest aggregate in BDCL history although only the second best that season – and Mitchells & Butlers'. Old Hill closed the shop door until 1975, when Warwickshire and Worcestershire's second teams joined. The former played until 1988 – signing off as champions and replaced by Wolverhampton – while the latter survived just two years, replaced at first by Duport, a Dudley-based furniture company, then Worcester City and, when they folded in 1992, Stratford. Already the ambiguous geographical parameters implicit in "Birmingham *and District*" were widening.

The final club under the BDCL umbrella before the formation of the Premier League was Worcestershire's Barnt Green in 1995, who won it at the first attempt with Zimbabwe international Grant Flower becoming just the 10th player in 106 years to break the 1,000-run mark. His brother Andy had achieved it a week earlier for WBD, and it has still only been done 15 times by 14 players – Graham Yallop and Moeen's brother Kadeer among them – with just four of them amateurs. There are few cheap runs on offer here.

If the decline of Old Hill, Stourbridge, Walsall and others is sad, then Barnt Green provide one of the league's modern success stories: the Premier League's sole top-flight ever-presents, runners-up in the 2002 and 2005 national knockouts as well as last year's national T20, Tom Banton's alma mater. And yet, they only got in when Mitchells & Butlers' folded after the brewery sold off the ground.

"We shouldn't be denying well-structured clubs with good junior sections and ground facilities the chance to improve," says Nick Archer, who skippered Walsall to national glory in 1996 and, for the last 22 years, has been BDPCL general manager. "Nobody has a divine right to play Birmingham League. But it should be a whole club, with strength throughout, on and off the field, not just a first team."

Of the 24 Premier League titles, only seven have been won by the old guard: five to Walsall, one to WBD and last year's to Smethwick, their first since 1968. All four county leagues have provided champions, 13 titles in all (17 if you include those pre-Prem latecomers, Wolverhampton, Stratford and Barnt Green), which might in itself vindicate the opening-up process.

Some of this might be down to money, though not solely in the ways imagined. The increasing success of clubs from market towns and villages – a pattern seen elsewhere – may have something to do with the leisure time of affluent retiree volunteers, or kids from middle-class homes, perhaps with university on the horizon, who are able to ignore cash offers in the way that those from inner-city clubs cannot. Either way, the old Birmingham League order has changed. But is the cricket better?

"There will always be that 'was it better in my day?' debate," says Archer. "We may not have the same success in the nationals, but that's probably because other leagues have come up to our level rather than vice versa. Our strongest club over the past five or six years [Berkswell] has never entered the national knockout."

Evaluating the league's current strength – both compared to others today and itself in the past – through that national lens is not as clear-cut as it seems.

"There are really good players in the league now," continues Archer. "Fielding has definitely improved and, with restrictions on bowlers, probably captaincy strategies. Things go in cycles, and it would have been impossible to keep that standard year after year. You can't stand still. If the league had stayed entrenched and not moved into a promotion-and-relegation structure, it would probably have been left behind. But I think the Birmingham League still stands comparison with any in the country." ■

BELOW: A good turnout at Barnt Green, a success story of recent Birmingham League history

BOTTOM: Nick Archer, BDPCL general manager

PHOTO COURTESY OF BDPCL

BIRMINGHAM & DISTRICT CRICKET LEAGUE
CHAMPIONS 1976

## THE WCM COACHING TEAM

**Mark Ramprakash**
Former England batting coach

**Anya Shrubsole**
World Cup- and Ashes-winning former England seamer

**Lydia Greenway**
Former England batter turned coach and broadcaster

**Keaton Jennings**
Lancashire and England opening bat

**Matt Parkinson**
Lancashire and England leg-spinner

**Ollie Pope**
England's Test No.3

**Toby Radford**
Former West Indies batting coach

**John Simpson**
Middlesex wicketkeeper

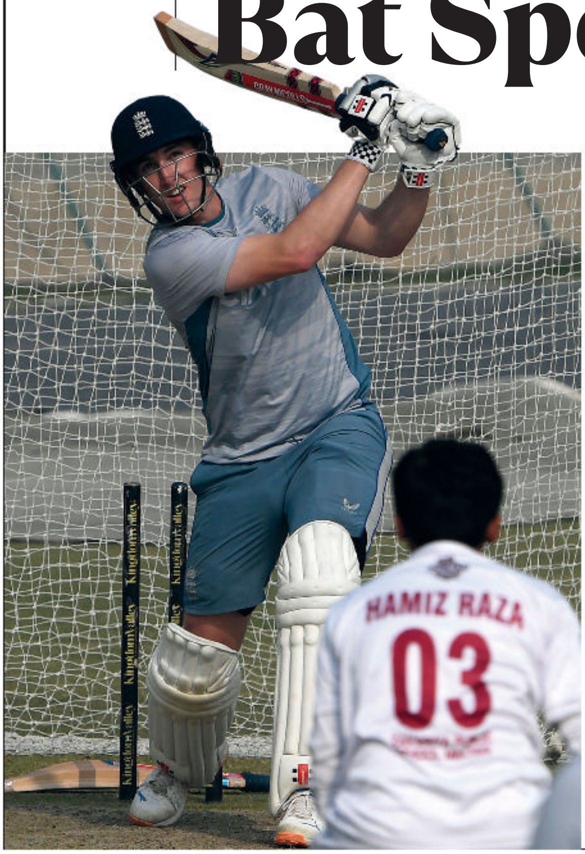
**Alex Tudor**
Former England fast bowler; now head coach at Kimbolton School

The WCM coaching team is here to help you improve your cricket. Got a query? A kink in your backlift? A front-foot problem you can't fix? Email us editorial@wisden.com and one of our experts could be tackling your question in a future issue

# Bat Speed

> *Watching Harry Brook smash it around in Pakistan, the commentators keep referring to his 'bat speed'. What exactly is bat speed, and is it something which can be coached?*
> **Mark Weaver, via email**

BELOW: Harry Brook has added more power to his strokes by developing his bat speed



### Mark Ramprakash:

Bat speed isn't a new term – it's been used in the game ever since I started playing – but you do hear it more and more. It's very similar to another term you'll hear regularly: 'quick hands'. In essence, it's the ability to get your hands through the ball quickly, whipping the bat through to generate extra power. You'll see great players of the pull shot who are able to execute the stroke with a bit of whip in their wrists. I watched Desmond Haynes do that for Middlesex. In the past, bat speed was probably viewed as a natural talent, but in recent years it has become looked upon as something which you can train.

**If we take your example of Harry Brook, bat speed is something he's developed.** I went on an England under-19 trip with him to India a few years back and his good eye and excellent timing marked him out as a player of real promise. He was also very good with his footwork and already an accomplished player of spin bowling, whether it was coming down the wicket or getting deep in the crease and cutting or pulling. He judged length very well, which is always a good sign. Since then, his exposure to short-format cricket – where he's worked on trying to clear the ropes – has helped him develop his bat speed.

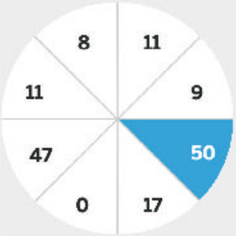
**I would draw similarities with the golfing world, where in recent years youngsters are being coached to swing hard and fast.** In golf they use flexible sticks with weights on the end to help get that whip and snap, and there's specialist equipment you can use in cricket, too – differently weighted training bats, for example. With a lighter bat, you can really start to *feel* the bat speed. With a heavier one you'll have to engage your core to bring it through and you should feel the benefits when you switch back to your regular bat. You could also try using a weighted training ball. They're soft on the outside and have a weight on the inside, so when you make contact you really have to stay in the shot or it just won't go anywhere.

**Bat speed is a healthy thing to explore, and it can bring new confidence to your game.** It's an exciting thing to do and it's part of cricket's evolution, with batters increasingly using their wrists to generate more power. But it's important to always remember that you have to execute the shot with control if you want to reap the rewards.

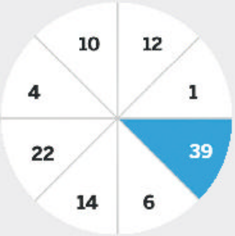
> **With a lighter bat, you can really start to *feel* the bat speed. With a heavier one you'll have to engage your core to bring it through and you should feel the benefits when you switch back to your regular bat**

## Brook in full flow

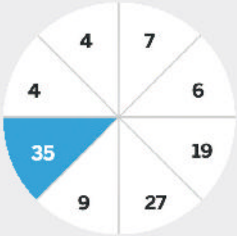
Harry Brook was devastating on England's Test tour of Pakistan, using his bat speed and strong wrists to manipulate the field and find the gaps. The pull was his most productive stroke in his centuries at Rawalpindi and Multan, while the cover drive was his most prolific shot at Karachi, as he made his third century in as many matches. His wagon wheels from those knocks reveal just how difficult he is to bowl at, with a fairly even spread of runs on the off-side and leg-side across all three innings.



**First Test, Rawalpindi**
**153 (from 116 balls)**
**19 fours, 5 sixes**



**Second Test, Multan**
**108 (from 149 balls)**
**14 fours, 1 six**



**Third Test, Karachi**
**111 (from 150 balls)**
**8 fours, 3 sixes**

**Take Rohit Sharma as an example. He's an orthodox player who makes the game look simple and he has a stellar IPL record.** Why? Because he has *control*. It can be tempting to look for more power and distance in your shots, but if you're clearing the boundary ropes you still only get six however far you hit it.

**Someone like Andre Russell is more like a baseball hitter.** He loads up on the back foot and then at the point of release he transfers his bodyweight forward, using his right hip to create lag with the bat and power the ball anywhere from long-on to deep square-leg.

**With more and more white-ball cricket being played, bat speed has become viewed as a really important asset.** But there have always been players – and very successful Test players – who have had quicks hands and good bat speed. My challenge to the young players I coach is: can you be good at everything? Can you develop a game which is adaptable and therefore effective in all formats? Brook is a fine example of a player with the skill and technique to do that. ■

### DRILL IT

A good way to work on your bat speed is fast-feed drills. I'll give a batter five or six underarm feeds in a row, and underarm them quickly. As soon as the batter has hit one, I look to feed the next one, not giving them much time to get back into a set position.

# Controlling the swing

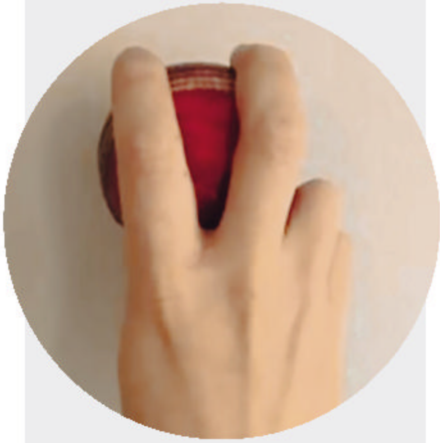
*As a right-arm bowler with a bit of pace, I often get given first go with the new ball. I'm a natural inswing bowler but sometimes I have this tendency to push it down the leg-side against the right-hander, when the movement gets out of control. I'd rather have some movement than none at all, but on the bad days it can get a bit wild, and before I know it, my spell is over and that's me done. Any suggestions welcome!*
**Connor Laithwaite, via email**

## Anya Shrubsole, player-coach at Southern Vipers:

**First of all, work out quickly how much it's swinging on any given day.** That will determine what line you need to start the delivery on. The main clue is overhead conditions, or if it's a bit damp after some rain. You should be able to tell quite quickly if it's a bowling day, and then adjust your mindset accordingly. Also the ball – some of them swing more than others. Don't ask me why!

**The more it's swinging, the wider you need to start the ball.** As a natural inswing bowler who angles the ball into the pads, you need to start the ball far outside the eyeline, starting it almost at the space between the keeper and first slip.

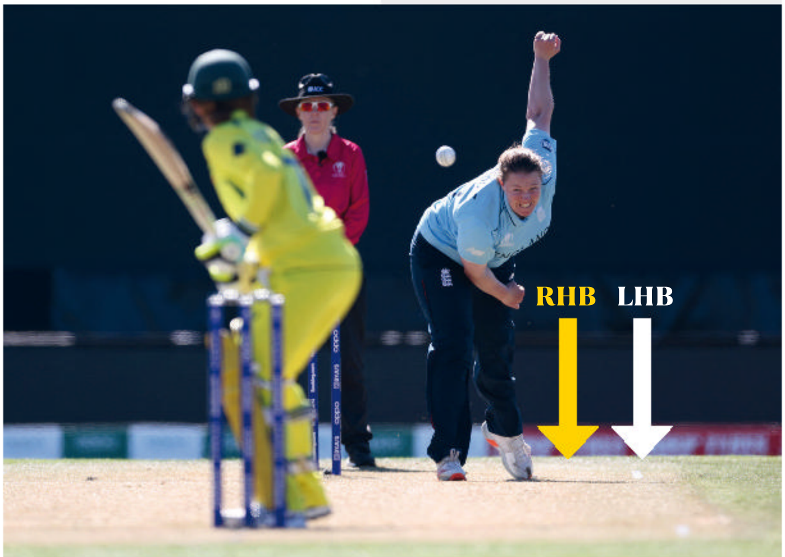
**Get your body going through the crease in a straight line.** That way, the wrist – which is the single most



### The cross-seam ball

A final option is to go cross-seam, but this will stop the ball from swinging entirely, so I'd say that's a last resort. Going cross-seam may be the simplest way to get the ball to hold its line, but swing is such an important weapon, and when it's happening, it can be lethal. This should by and large stop your inswing getting out of control, but don't go there unless you're desperate!

RIGHT: Shrubsole took 227 wickets in an illustrious England career



### Bowling to left-hand/right-hand combinations

Often as an opening bowler you'll face a right-hand/left-hand opening partnership, which can pose problems for line-control. Bowling over the wicket to a left-hander, I take half a step to my left at the top of my mark before I run in. That way, I change the angle at which I approach the crease, which results in a natural adjustment in line.

important component to bowling pace accurately – is behind the ball, pushing it through on the right line.

**A common technical problem with inswing bowlers is our tendency to ‘fall over’ in our delivery.** I had problems with this myself. When I was struggling, my front foot would splay outwards, and naturally my body would then follow suit, which meant I needed to have a counterbalance, or I’d have ended up bowling it off the pitch. So, work on being really strong with your front arm and your front side, so you’re driving down the wicket, rather than ‘falling away’ to the off-side in the delivery stride and therefore pushing the ball down the leg-side.

**Alignment of your feet at the crease is so important.** The key to accurate bowling is making sure your feet, hips, shoulder and front arm are moving towards the target.

### DRILL IT

### POLES APART

If you feel like you’re falling away to the off-side, one good drill that I’ve done many times myself is to place two poles in the ground vertically, a little bit wider apart than the width of your body, and work on running between them and completing your action without your body touching either pole.

# TOP FIVE: WICKETKEEPING TIPS

### With John Simpson

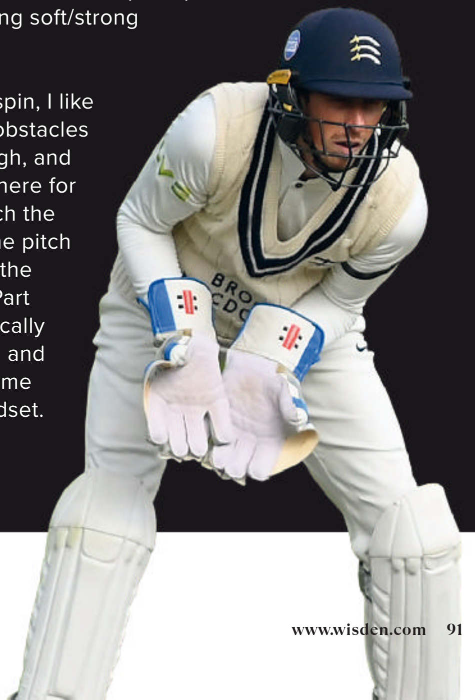
**1** A lot of my stuff is based around the basics. Head-hands-feet. Jack Russell once said to me, make your basics world-class, and then you can do all the funky stuff. So, one of the drills I spend hours doing is simply with a bunch of tennis balls and a racquet, setting myself up behind the stumps and getting somebody to hit balls quickly, one after the other, hard into the surface. That way, any technical deficiencies can be ironed out. The beauty of the drill is that if your hands are hard, the ball will bounce out. It forces you to relax, and ‘give’ with the ball. You can also subsequently work on one-hand catches. It’s all about grooving your rhythm.

**2** Standing back to the quicks, I used to crouch down, as the old greats used to do it, and then I’d come up when the ball’s bowled. Now I stand more like a goalkeeper in football, which gives me the best chance of diving forward or to the side, or to spring off to claim an inside edge.

**3** When I was young, my dad, who was a good keeper at club level, refused to let me practise with a mat! He felt if I could dive on the indoor surface, and cushion that blow, I could dive anywhere. Nowadays, I’d advocate a low, thick crash mat for keepers to dive onto with freedom, knowing they’ll be protected against injury. There are three key rolls for a keeper: the standard catch and roll onto your left shoulder for the edge against the right-hander; the one-handed slide, diving powerfully low and the arm extending out – the old Ian Healy trademark; and finally, down the leg-side, catching and then ‘reverse rolling’ by landing on your right-hand side.

**4** Keeping in England, the ball wobbles after it passes the bat. So I’d advocate getting as close as you’re comfortable with to negate the lateness of that swing. One good drill for this is to get a catching ramp and get balls fired onto its surface; I’ll start deep and then progressively get closer to the hitter, sharpening my reactions as I get closer. Another good drill to practise is to face an indoor cricket ball out of a bowling machine. The ball moves extravagantly but the same principles apply about getting close, having soft/strong hands and watching the ball.

**5** Practising standing up to spin, I like to put various cones and obstacles in the road to replicate the rough, and then I add a shadow batter in there for distraction. It forces me to watch the ball at all times, deviating off the pitch and striking the cones to send the ball off in different directions. Part of the skill here is to stay physically relaxed, with almost ‘lazy’ arms and soft hands, while at the same time maintaining an aggressive mindset.



The Wisden Club Cricket Hall of Fame

*Do you know someone deserving of a place in the Wisden Club Cricket Hall of Fame? Email editorial@wisden.com*

## Number 69

# John Bowden

### Scott Oliver profiles a stylish left-hander from Sevenoaks now into his fourth decade as a diminutive giant of club cricket in Kent

Born two short years after organised league cricket first came to Kent in 1971, no player in KCL history has been quite as productive as John Bowden, whose impishly adventurous opening batting has clocked up over 12,000 first XI league runs, including 19 centuries, while his late-blooming left-arm spin has snared 299 top-flight victims "by firing it into the pads". It has been a glorious 33-year romp around the Garden of England, all but one of which has been at his beloved Sevenoaks Vine.

"I went to play at Lordswood in 2000," he says. "I didn't make many runs, but I would come back with my little packet of money every Saturday and spend it behind the bar at The Vine, which told its own story. This is home."

Ten years before that sabbatical, Bowden made a duck on debut, his game kicking on after "the unbelievable eye-opener" of a season at Bankstown in Sydney in 1994/95. He made his first hundred in 1995, and four more the next year as he compiled a career-best 850 runs, which ultimately led to a summer with Sussex's second XI in 1997 and fifties against Northants, Essex and Durham, along with 101 against Worcestershire. "Richard Illingworth said to me at drinks, 'Stop just blocking me. Use your feet and hit me over the top'. I was quite shocked. So I did, got a few runs, and he said, 'There you go!'"

However, with Sussex in transition and failing to offer more cricket, it was a bittersweet season – even more so back at Sevenoaks. Defeat in the prestigious Evening Standard Cup final at The Oval was his "worst day in cricket", although Bowden top-scored in the match before being bowled round his legs as they fell two runs short. The blow was softened by the club's first KCL title in 19 years, including career-best figures of 5-7 against Dover, "and I didn't bowl again all season!"

Although Bowden's most consistent cricket still lay ahead of him, he was a lock for the Kent Cricket Board XI, which enabled him to play a handful of List-A fixtures against county opposition, including Shane Warne's Hampshire. "He bowled two overs at me and wasn't best pleased when I reverse-swept him, which was always going to happen. He said, 'Learn how to f****ing play cricket before you play shots like that, mate'. We had a fag on the balcony later. Just a great guy. The best day of my cricketing life."

The eight seasons after turning 30 brought almost 4,500 runs at 40.94. He was the KCL's second top run-scorer in 2008 (659) and 2011 (800), while 2007 (792) saw him finish top of the pile, playing the first half of the summer alongside Steve Smith, outscoring him in six of eight games.

An ankle operation, partiality to "beers that lead to other beers" and some weight gain saw the bounteous years dry up, but hearing someone call him "a fat has-been" sharpened the focus for 2014, when a Sevenoaks team featuring a young Zak Crawley landed a first title for 17 years. The slimmed-down Bowden averaged 46.7, scoring third-most KCL runs (albeit almost 400 behind Marnus Labuschagne), with three hundreds, including 136 on the penultimate Saturday, before sending down 10-0-35-3 on a nervy last day and leaving the field in a shower of champagne. "To do that alongside so many youngsters I'd coached was hugely satisfying," he purrs.

Having spent last year in the seconds, Bowden could easily fill the weekends painting his bold, Gerhard Richter-influenced abstract expressionist canvasses, which he hopes might one day replace teaching as his career. But the itch still needs scratching. "If I could still play first-team cricket at 50, I'd be pretty proud of that. If not, I'll definitely play seconds. I don't see an end in sight because I just love playing cricket. Saturdays would feel empty without it." Evidently, a passion not yet ready to wither on the Vine. ■

> **"Warne bowled two overs at me and wasn't best pleased when I reverse-swept him. He said, 'Learn how to f****ing play cricket before you play shots like that, mate'. We had a fag on the balcony later. The best day of my cricketing life**

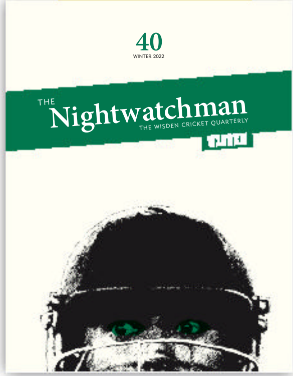
BELOW: Bowden takes the plaudits after a champagne finish to Sevenoaks Vine's 2014 title-winning season

The Quiz

# Time Warp

WIN!

The winner of this month's quiz will receive a a copy of issue 40 of the *Nightwatchman*, the *Wisden* cricket quarterly.



Send in your answers via email (**editorial@wisden.com**) or via post (Time Warp, Wisden Cricket Monthly, Fourth Floor, Bedser Stand, Kia Oval, Kennington, London, SE11 5SS). Entries must be received by February 8, 2023.

This competition is open to UK residents only.

### 1. 5 years ago...
On February 3, 2018, India beat Australia by eight wickets in the men's Under-19 World Cup final at Mount Maunganui. Who captained India to victory and made a century on Test debut later the same year?

### 2. 10 years ago...
On February 26, 2013, India defeated Australia by eight wickets at Chennai in the first of a four-match Test series. Who made 224 in the hosts' first innings, the sixth and final hundred of his Test career?

### 3. 15 years ago...
On February 29, 2008, Graeme Smith shared an unbeaten opening partnership of 405 on day one of the second Test between South Africa and Bangladesh at Chattogram, continuing on to a world-record stand of 415 the following morning. Who was his famously superstitious opening partner?

### 4. 20 years ago...
On February 19, 2003, which team broke their own record for the lowest total at a men's World Cup after being bundled out for 36 by Sri Lanka at Paarl?

### 5. 25 years ago...
On February 9, 1998, England lost to West Indies by three wickets in the second Test at Port of Spain. Which visiting seamer returned match figures of 11-110?

### 6. 30 years ago...
On February 15, 1993, the 20th man to score a century on Test debut for England was born. Which player achieved that feat, reaching the milestone at Galle?

### 7. 35 years ago...
On February 29, 1988, New Zealand and England drew the first of a three-Test series at Eden Park. Which opening batter – who never got to record an international hundred – was dismissed for 99 in England's first innings?

### 8. 40 years ago...
On February 26, 1983, New Zealand defeated England by 84 runs in the third ODI at Lancaster Park to complete a series whitewash. Who top-scored for the Kiwis in all three matches but played the last of his 41 ODIs later the same year?

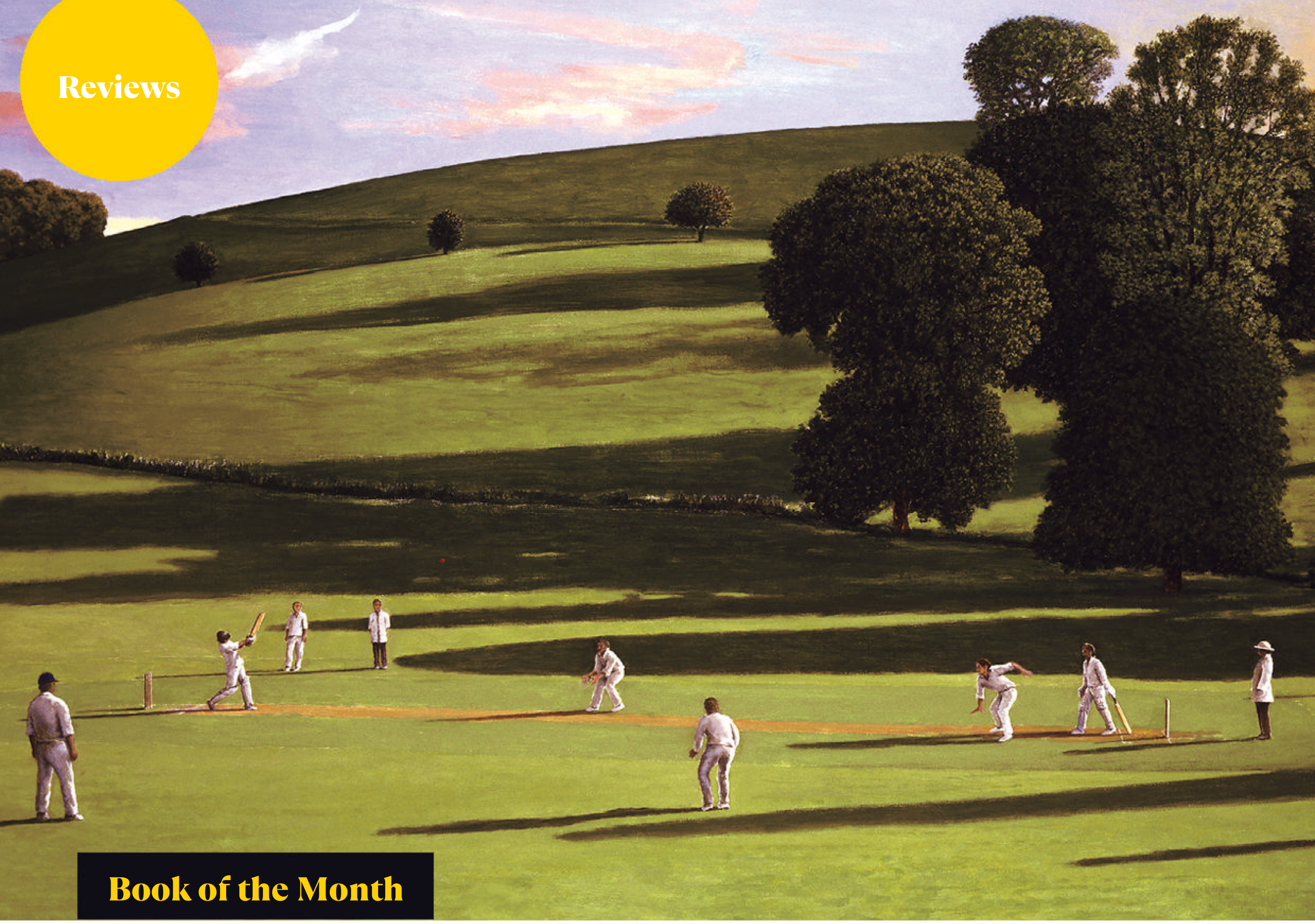
### 9. 45 years ago...
On February 15, 1978, New Zealand beat England by 72 runs in the first Test at the Basin Reserve. Which Somerset left-hander opened the batting in England's second innings and remained undefeated but only made 5*?

### 10. 50 years ago...
On February 20, 1973, which Aussie pace bowler, nicknamed 'Tangles' due to his idiosyncratic action, collected the second of his six five-wicket hauls in Tests, achieving the milestone at Kingston, Jamaica?

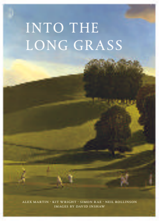
**Last month's answers:**

1. Harry Brook 2. James Tredwell 3. Andrew Symonds 4. Andrew Caddick 5. Sabina Park, Kingston 6. Paul Taylor 7. Chris Broad 8. Mudassar Nazar and Javed Miandad 9. Geoffrey Boycott 10. Rahul Dravid **Winner: Greg Sykes**

**Last month's answers:**
**THE MONUMENTAL QUIZ OF 2022**
12 MONTHS, 12 QUESTIONS: JAN - highest average for any bowler to have played 10 Tests FEB - Benny Howell MAR - Babar Azam APR - Clean Slate MAY - Josh Baker JUNE - Moeen Ali JULY - Alice Davidson-Richards AUG - Anderson, Muralitharan, Herath SEPT - *God Save The King* was sung OCT - varsity matches at Lord's NOV - his lowest ever round of golf DEC - Tagenarine Chanderpaul; WHAT'S IN A NUMBER: 1. Bairstow's century at Trent Bridge 2. England's run chase in the T20 World Cup semi 3. Surrey's Championship record 4. Bumrah's record over 5. England's world record ODI score 6. Zak Crawley's summer Test scores 7. Number of days Virat Kohli went without scoring an international hundred 8. The fastest ball at the T20 World Cup, bowled by Mark Wood 9. Daryl Mitchell's summer Test scores 10. Sam Northeast's quadruple for Glamorgan; WHAT LINKS: Jos Buttler, James Vince, Fakhar Zaman, Laura Wolvaardt and Dawid Malan all finished as leading run-scorers in domestic short-form tournaments; MAKING IT SING: 1E 2B 3K 4J 5G 6I 7D 8A 9F 10H 11C; KEVIN OR ELON: 1 Elon 2 Kevin 3 Kevin 4 Elon 5 Elon 6 Kevin 7 Elon 8 Elon 9 Elon 10 Kevin; SAY WHAT YOU SEE: 1. Brydon Carse 2. Matt Potts 3. Peter Handscomb 4. Jack Leaning 5. Kate Cross 6. Colin de Grandhomme
**1st place equal: Matthew Wright, Matthew Norman, Third: Richard Lewis**



Book of the Month



# INTO THE LONG GRASS

BY DAVID INSHAW, SIMON RAE, ALEX MARTIN,
KIT WRIGHT, NEIL ROLLINSON

**Top Edge Press, £9.99**

Cricket art is pretty much confined to cricket pavilions. Portraits of old captains, bucolic scenes from the game's beginnings, wan-eyed Edwardians with cigarette card moustaches, you know the sort of thing. MCC has a large collection, so big in fact that only a percentage of it is on display at any one time in the Long Room and around the pavilion's stairways. The remainder is carefully catalogued and stored away. I was once given a tour, and there's some amazing stuff. A lot of amateur artists paint something and send it in, and that has to be kept, too. I remember a couple of portraits of Kevin Pietersen that well… they live on in the mind's eye, put it that way.

But the greatest piece of cricket art I have seen does not reside in any of the hermetic pavilions of Test match grounds. It's a painting called *The Cricket Game*, made in 1976 by the British artist David Inshaw. Part of the point of a truly great painting is that it can't really be described, otherwise the emotions that it holds could be captured in words or a photograph or some other art form. The fact that it *is* a painting is the magic of it, and *The Cricket Game* is a painting of vast mystery. Inshaw calls it "a landscape with cricket in it," and that is the way to think of it.

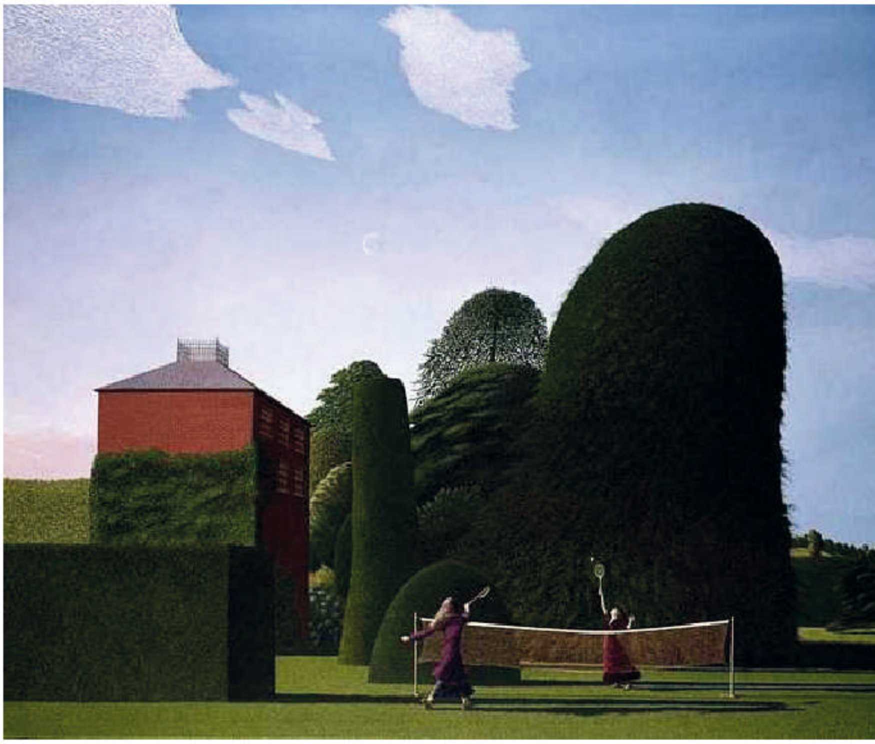
To me, like a lot of Inshaw's work, it's a painting of and about England, but an England that exists only in the imagination, in dreams. It depicts a perfect ground, the bright sun dipping behind hills and casting deep shadows across vivid green as the last overs of a match take place. The players, tiny against the hills yet somehow distinct in character, are entirely caught up in the game, oblivious to the wider vision that they have

ABOVE: *The Cricket Game III*

become a part of. It feels that they are racing to finish, to beat the shadows and the coming dusk: the ball itself seems to have been hit into those shadows, which are encroaching ominously towards the players, bringing an end to the game, to the day, to all of this rapture.

Its air of heightened reality exists in lots of other Inshaw's paintings too, in particular his best-known work, 1973's seductive and opaque *The Badminton Game*. In the echo of the titles, and in the way that both can feel visually overwhelming, I thought that *The Cricket Game*'s location, like that of *The Badminton Game*, had to be imaginary, and yet it is real.

I found a catalogue entry about the painting by the poet and broadcaster Simon Rae, whose name was familiar from his acclaimed biography of WG Grace. I got in touch with Simon, who, it transpired, had first met David Inshaw in a queue at their local post office. *The Cricket Game*, he said, was set at a ground called Littlebredy in Dorset, a venue beloved of Rae's team of "poets, boozers and irregulars" who tour together each summer. Through Simon, I got to speak to Inshaw himself, who told me that there are actually three versions of *The Cricket Game*: the 1976 original; a painting of a match at Wormsley done as a commission; and then *The Cricket Game III*, again at Littlebredy, which can be told apart from the first, if you want to do it quickly, by the fact that the batter in it is right-handed, rather than the left-hander of the original.



ABOVE: *The Badminton Game*, 1973

> **"The players, tiny against the hills yet somehow distinct in character, are entirely caught up in the game, oblivious to the wider vision that they have become a part of. It feels that they are racing to finish, to beat the shadows and the coming dusk**

Now, Rae and Inshaw have produced *Into The Long Grass*, a book/pamphlet of Inshaw's images of cricket accompanied by poems from Rae, Kit Martin and Neil Rollinson, and some text from Alex Martin. It's a private publication, but I urge anyone with an interest to snap one up via the email below. There are a series of etchings from Inshaw which feel more explicit than his original painting: dark and foreboding copses of trees that look like studies for those of *The Cricket Game*; a crease empty of everything except a single set of stumps, deep shadows again encroaching; players with indistinct faces caught up in the action. All are unsettling, their austere nature at odds with the transient beauty they depict.

The words match perfectly, whether it's Rae's "grinning death's head stitches" on the ball's seam, or Kit Wright's "White-robed cricketers, inexorably/Had made their way down into the valley/To do their dance of stillness".

In his essay, Alex Martin writes: "In the 1970s, David Inshaw came to this valley and painted *The Cricket Game*... His picture brought us here. He plays too, one of the irregulars, laying his brushes aside for more rustic weaponry."

The cycle suggested in the painting's darkest subtext is in motion: The painting brought the team, the team brought the painter back with them, all chasing escape from the inevitable end that is somehow there within the four corners of *The Cricket Game*, a piece of overwhelming and enigmatic artistry, a landscape with cricket in it, a masterpiece.

**Jon Hotten**

*Into The Long Grass* is available from Top Edge Press. For details email **pomroybatting@gmail.com**

# Chaos Theory

## Kolkata Knight Riders v Royal Challengers Bangalore Bangalore, April 18, 2008

A small change can make a big difference. James Wallace re-imagines key moments from the game's past

### The Match

**Kolkata Knight Riders 120-7** (D Hussey 43; P Kumar 3-33)
**Royal Challengers Bangalore 121-5** (R Dravid 48*)

**RCB won by 5 wickets (with 15 balls to spare)**

### The Cast

**Brendon McCullum**
**Sourav Ganguly**
**Rahul Dravid**
**Jacques Kallis**

*The IPL arrived in April 2008 with its now-customary razzmatazz, the extravagant opening ceremony getting the capacity crowd and millions watching on TV in the mood for a box-office spectacle. But what followed was must-see viewing for unexpected reasons…*

**SG:** Wow. What a night that was.
**RD:** Even the old-timers like me and Jacques, we'd never really experienced anything like the electric atmosphere that night. Right, JK?
**JK:** Old-timers? Careful Mr Wall, I've never looked or felt better. Just because you're getting a bit grey and crumbly…
**RD:** True, true. You do look great. Tell me, do you put that down to not having to bowl anymore, or is it the new 'work' you've had up top?
**JK:** *[Ignoring the latter comment]* God I hated bowling. Didn't mind it that night, though. *[All eyes turn to McCullum, who offers only a thin-lipped smile.]*

*After all the fanfare, Sourav Ganguly won the toss and decided KKR would get the party started. McCullum strode out with his captain to take the first over… and couldn't get the ball off the square. Five dots later, Ganguly walked down the pitch to have a word with his opening partner.*

**SG:** I remember telling you to watch the ball, keep it simple. You just had this glazed look in your eyes.
**BM:** I took it in my stride, I was pretty confident in my approach.
**SG:** Right, yes, but… I mean, how many dots was it you faced in the end?

*Jeers and boos rang out around the stadium as McCullum stunk the place out with his scoreless wafting. Eventually a pained silence settled over the M Chinnaswamy Stadium as the much-hyped spectacle became more of a sodden squib. To everyone's relief, McCullum finally fell for 12 runs off 73 balls, offering a simple return catch to Kallis.*

ABOVE: Rahul Dravid's classical approach became the norm in the IPL

BELOW: McCullum fluffed his lines on opening night

**I don't look back, only forward. I'm like a shark. A shark with biceps**
**Brendon McCullum**

**BM:** Y'know I'm all about owning the moment, being true to myself and my methods. I'm pretty zen about these things.
**SG:** C'mon Baz, you can be honest with us, it was 15 years ago now. You had a shocker. You must've been gutted?
**BM:** Fellas *[placing a fresh stick of Wrigley's in his mouth]*, I don't look back, only forward. I'm like a shark. A shark with biceps.
**RD:** Come on, Brendon. We get that you don't fear failure, but this gung-ho baloney doesn't wash. That night was an embarrassment.
**SG:** An aberration
**JK:** And in front of so many people. Sheeesh, what was that like?
**BM:** *[Raising his eyebrows slightly]* I trusted my gut. I'd do the same thing again.
**RD:** You did! Over and over again, trying to moose everything and it never coming off. You threw the kitchen sink, the fridge, the cafetière, the whole caboodle at it every time.
**BM:** Uh-uh. I was relentless, always moving forward.
**SG:** But you kept getting out for nothing. They stopped picking you, Baz. You had to retire early. That must've hurt?
**BM:** *[Sounding more and more robotic]* Pain is just weakness leaving the body. Pain is good. Healing is good. Trust... guts... methods.

*McCullum's relentless, misfiring approach was widely ridiculed but he persisted with it for the rest of his career, without any success. His failures were blamed on his misguided attempts to see the game as 'fun', something to be enjoyed rather than endured.*

**JK:** Cricket isn't supposed to be fun. It's supposed to be tough, relentless. You should lose sleep over it. It should make you lose your bloody hair!
**RD:** You need patience, obdurateness – a fear of failure can take you a long way!
**BM:** OK fellas, you do you and I'll do me. No regrets. We go again. *[McCullum unsheathes another stick of Wrigley's, his hand slightly trembling as he places the Juicy Fruit in his mouth.]*
**SG:** Baz mate, are you ok?
**BM:** *[Collecting himself]* All good, mate. All good.
**SG:** You know, we all like to have fun too. But away from cricket. Cricket is work and that's fine. Jacques has got his watercolours, Rahul does his stand-up, and I've got my sideline as a life-drawing model.
**JK:** Who knew that getting topless on the Lord's balcony would be so lucrative, eh?
**SG:** Exactly. I've never felt more alive than when I'm posing on a *chaise longue* under the intense gaze of a roomful of retirees... but you can't have that buzz all the time. Too much buzz is bad, Baz. I think we can safely say that now.

*McCullum's humiliating fall from grace brought about a new era of orthodoxy. Players with cautious and classical styles were held up as the ideal and the IPL became known for its conservative, risk-free cricket, inspiring a new generation of batters in thrall to the coaching manual.*

*McCullum stuck to his guns, though, blindly following an ultra-aggressive path. His refusal to adapt his approach eventually saw him drift out of the game. He put himself forward for coaching roles but was laughed out of town, his reputation in tatters.*

**JK:** Anyway, let's drop the cricket chat, shall we. There's more to life! Who fancies a drink?

*The words have barely left Kallis' mouth when McCullum pulls out a bottle of tequila and four shot glasses from inside his tracksuit.*

**BM:** Shots!
**JK:** Oh, I was actually thinking... err, there's a nice wine bar round the corner?
**SG:** No lemon?
**RD:** No salt?
**BM:** *[Shaking his head and smiling]* No need, keep it simple. Try not to think about it. Go with your instinct.

*McCullum downs his shot, gathers his things and gets up to leave.*

**JK:** You're off then?
**BM:** 'Fraid so, I've got to get back to feed the piranhas and let the wolves out for a tinkle before bed. And I'm up early to open the sky diving centre. Catch ya later, fellas.

*McCullum climbs aboard his Segway, dons his wraparound shades and scoots off, leaving the three legends flabbergasted.*

**JK:** You see that?
**RD:** I know. No helmet.
**SG:** He'll never learn.

BELOW: McCullum was forced to look outside of cricket for employment opportunities

GARY PRATT

# The *Run Out* That Changed My Life

The 2005 Ashes cult hero talks to James Wallace about *that* piece of fielding at Trent Bridge and its aftermath

**INTERVIEW** JAMES WALLACE

**The Match:**
Fourth Ashes Test, England v Australia, Trent Bridge

**The Date:**
August 27, 2005

> ***I would much rather have still been playing county cricket and that the run out didn't happen at all, to be brutally honest***

**I'd been around the England squad that Michael Vaughan was forging for a couple of years before 2005,** so I'd had experience of being on the field for short periods at a time. Duncan Fletcher was into getting in some young blood and seeing how they handled themselves around the group.

**Before the Ponting run out, Vaughan sent me to field in the slips and I actually don't think I'd ever fielded there before!** Fred [Andrew Flintoff] was firing it down at high speed and I'm in the slips in the Ashes praying that a nick doesn't fly my way. It was ludicrous!

**I was comfortable in the covers though, and I wanted the ball to come to me.** The actual Ponting run out is a bit of a blur. If you watch it back, there's no one backing up and, believe me, it's so hard to hit the stumps direct, even if you practise... Ponting doesn't know how unlucky he was. An inch either side and it's all a totally different story, but he was way out. It was a terrible call from Damien Martyn.

**Ricky Ponting famously went absolutely ballistic, but we didn't realise that on the field at the time.** We only found out when Matthew Hoggard reported back. He'd been off the field and Ponting gave him a bit of a spray as he ran back on and Ricky was stomping off. We had a chuckle about that.

**I'm not a big drinker at all, and we didn't do anything ridiculously stupid,** but it is true that I was the last one standing in the hotel bar with Fred on the morning after the final day at The Oval. I was just revelling in it all, watching the sun come up.

**After a while the notoriety did start to sit uncomfortably with me.** I wanted to just get back to playing my cricket. I was only a young lad and had a lot still in front of me to achieve. I'd scored 1,000 runs in a season a couple of years before and in my mind I wasn't far away from breaking into the England ODI side.

**I would much rather have still been playing county cricket and that the run out didn't happen at all, to be brutally honest.** When I was dropped by Durham [in 2006] it was a real shock. I think there was some sour grapes and the England stuff was a factor. I enjoyed being in the England environment, I was learning loads, and thought it was better experience than being called up to the Durham second XI and then not actually playing. I felt a bit like they'd left me on the scrapheap.

**There was a strictness in county cricket back then that I think has gone out of the game a bit now.** When you look at the current England team and the way it is run, the attacking approach and the freedom, Duncan Fletcher was setting a precedent for that 20 years ago.

**People come up to me and recognise me from 2005.** Sometimes I wonder if I'm better known for this one thing than some cricket legends who dedicated their entire life to the game. I try not to think about it too much.

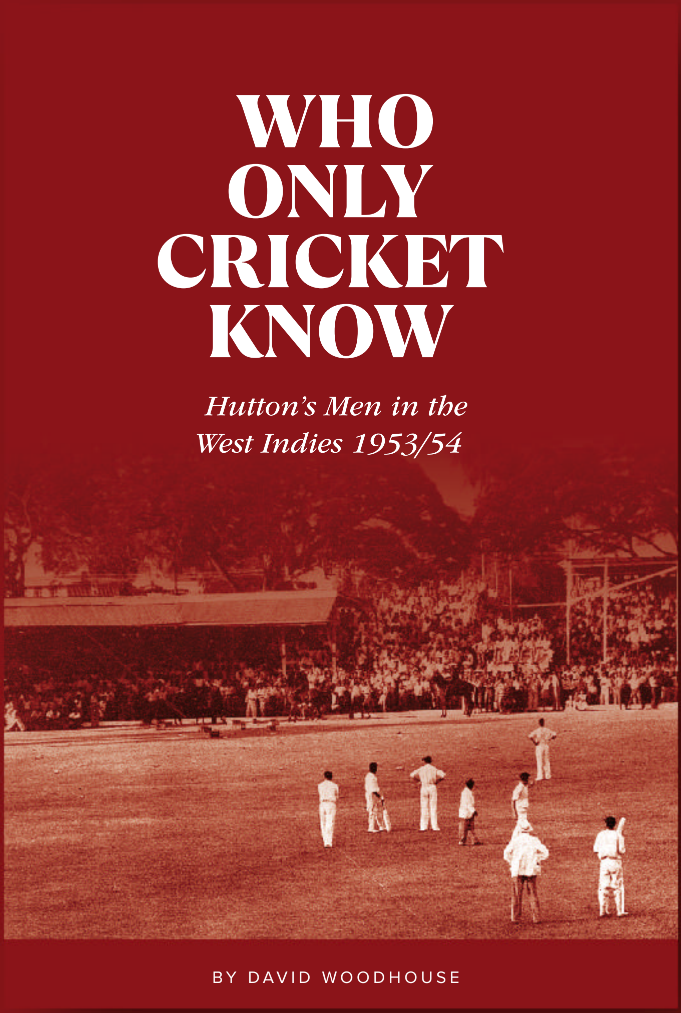
fairfield books

WINNER OF THE CRICKET WRITERS' CLUB BOOK AWARD 2022

THE CRICKET SOCIETY & MCC BOOK OF THE YEAR

WISDEN BOOK OF THE YEAR

SPORTS BOOK AWARDS 2022 THE SUNDAY TIMES WINNER



FOUR AWARDS
ONE MUST-READ BOOK

**This is the story of the most controversial tour in English cricket history after Bodyline.**

**David Woodhouse's meticulously researched and award-winning account offers detail, balance and colour.**

***'Superb'***
– Mike Atherton

***'Woodhouse achieves far more than the standard tour book by placing the series in its historical context in a scholarly, yet accessible way'***
– Vic Marks

Order now quoting offer code **WCMWOCK** or fill in the form below to get £3 off
THENIGHTWATCHMAN.NET 0203 696 5730 (9AM-5PM MON-FRI)
HARDBACK ~~£22~~ **£19 + P&P** E-BOOK ~~£11~~ **£8**

Please send me [ ] copy/ies of Who Only Cricket Know, priced at £22.00 (£19 + £3 UK p&p) per hardback copy. UK delivery only when ordering via this form.

Please send this form and a cheque **made payable to TriNorth Ltd** for the total value of the order to: Fairfield Books, TriNorth Ltd, Fourth Floor Bedser Stand, Kia Oval, London, SE11 5SS

**YOUR DETAILS**
NAME ______________________
EMAIL ______________________
TEL ______________________

**DELIVERY DETAILS**
NAME (if different to above) ______________________
ADDRESS ______________________
______________________
______________________ POSTCODE ______________________

audible

“ Boycott and Hotten. What a combination

GIDEON HAIGH

BEING
GEOFFREY
BOYCOTT
A first and second hand account of 108 caps
Geoffrey Boycott and Jon Hotten

Audiobook

OUT NOW

Read by Geoffrey Boycott and Jon Hotten

Buy now at audible.co.uk